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LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

BY THE LATE

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LECTURES ON THEOLOGY.

LECTURE LII.

ON THE MESSIAH.

PREDICTIONS OF THE MESSIAH PRIOR TO THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST.—
THEIR IMPORT.—EVIDENCE THAT JESUS OF NAZARETH IS THE MESSIAH.

WE have seen that Jesus Christ is the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant ; and, in speaking of him in these characters, it was impossible to avoid references to the mysterious constitution of his person. This, however, is a subject so important, as to be entitled to distinct consideration, both because it is the foundation upon which the whole scheme of redemption depends, and because some men of corrupt minds have in all ages, and in various forms, exerted themselves to overthrow it. But, before we enter upon it, it will be proper to attend to the notices which were given of the Saviour to the Church prior to his manifestation in the flesh, and then to shew that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

As God was not pleased to send his Son into the world immediately after the fall of our first parents, but to defer his mission till the fulness of time, it seemed good to his wisdom to give before-hand such information respecting him, as would support the faith and hope of his people, and enable them to know him when he should actually appear. It could not have been supposed that, in the ancient Scriptures, which record the divine dispensations to the descendants of the patriarchs, and the other nations of the world, there would be no

mention of an event, more wonderful and interesting than the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. We find, accordingly, that, as he is brought forward to view almost at the commencement of the sacred volume of the Jews, so it closes with a renewed prediction of his approach, and a delightful picture of the happiness which awaited our race, when "the Sun of righteousness should arise upon them with healing in his wings."*

The first notice of the Saviour was given on the afternoon of the day on which our first parents transgressed, and before they were expelled from paradise. It was included in the sentence pronounced upon their seducer; and while it foretold his destruction, implied a promise of their deliverance from his power. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."† It is plain, that the person here announced was to be the adversary and the conqueror of the serpent, or the devil, who, by the instrumentality of that animal, successfully tempted our first parents, and that he was to be a partaker of their nature. It would be absurd to consider the passage as relating to the enmity which literally subsists between the serpentine race and ours; nor is there any reason to understand it generally of a hostility which would afterwards arise between them and the devil, with whom they had now joined in a confederacy against God. The Seed of the woman denotes an individual, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom this designation is peculiarly applicable, because he has descended from her in a different manner from all her other posterity. In reference to him, an equivalent expression is used, when it is said, that, "In the fulness of the time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law."‡ To be made of a woman, and to be the seed of the woman, evidently signify the same thing; and hence, we may conclude this to be the import of the prediction, that the future antagonist of the serpent would be conceived and born in a miraculous manner. He is not called the seed of the man, although he was as much a descendant of Adam as of Eve, and his genealogy is traced up to him in the third chapter of Luke, because he was not derived

* Mal. iv. 2.

† Gen. iii. 15.

‡ Gal. iv. 4.

from him in the ordinary way. He is the seed of the woman in an exclusive sense, because his mother was a virgin.

The next notice of the Messiah was given to Abraham, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."* It may be supposed, that this promise may be understood in a lower sense, as foretelling the benefit which mankind would derive from his posterity, who were destined to be the original depositaries of Divine revelation, and from whom it was to be afterwards diffused over the various regions of the earth. But an Apostle has shewn us that it should be applied principally or solely to the Messiah. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."† By this second notice, the people of God obtained some new information. It not only repeated what was already known, that the Messiah would be a man, a partaker of the same nature with the patriarch, but it farther taught, that he should be a Jew; because it was expressly said, that "in Isaac this seed should be called," or that he should spring from Abraham, not by Ishmael, but by Isaac. The nation was specified, in which he should appear; and as they were thus excited to look for him, his relation to them was the ground on which that system of typical services was established, which was afterwards introduced by the ministry of Moses.

The next prediction to which I shall direct your attention, is contained in the following words: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."‡ Although it is agreed among Christians, that the Messiah is the person to whom this prophecy refers, yet there is a difference of opinion with respect to the import of the name or title by which he is described. Some suppose that שִׁילֹה, *Schiloh*, is derived from שָׁלַח, which signifies *to send*, the final ה, *heth*, being changed into ה, *he*, and, consequently, that שִׁילֹה, signifies *He that is sent*. In the Vulgate, it is translated *Qui mittendus est*, he who is to be sent. Our Saviour is elsewhere termed the Angel or Messenger of Jehovah, and often speaks of his mission in the New Testament:

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† Gal. iii. 16.

‡ Gen. xlix. 10.

“ Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God ?” Others are of opinion, that it is a derivative of שָׁלוֹם, which signifies *to be quiet* or *tranquil*; and that שִׁלּוֹה, *Schiloh*, is the peaceable one, or the giver of peace; a character which is with the greatest propriety given to our Saviour, on account, not only of the gentle virtues by which he was distinguished, but of the peace which he has happily effected between God and man, by his mediation. It may be added, that, as his religion inculcates brotherly love, so it actually creates it in the hearts of his genuine disciples. Under its influence, in the figurative language of prophecy, “ The wolf dwells with the lamb, and the leopard lies down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together.”† But, whatever is the true import of the title, as there is no doubt respecting the person to whom it belongs, the words now under consideration convey this additional information with regard to the Messiah, that he was to arise from the tribe of Judah, which should subsist as a distinct political body, till the time of his appearance. This prophecy will again come under review, in the subsequent part of the Lecture.

I proceed to lay before you another passage in which the family is pointed out, which should have the honour of claiming him as one of its members. “ The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.”‡ I acknowledge, that there is nothing in these words themselves which would justify us in applying them to the Messiah, and that, without bringing the light of other parts of Scripture to bear upon them, they might be considered merely as a promise, that the royal authority, with which David had been invested, should descend to his children in a long succession. But, in the mind of a person who is acquainted with the Scripture, no doubt will remain that the fruit of David’s body is that illustrious descendant, whom the Jews welcomed when he entered Jerusalem with this acclamation, “ Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”|| There is a manifest allusion to the passage in the

* John x. 36. † Is. xi. 6. ‡ Ps. cxxxii. 11. || Mat. xxi. 9.

words of the angel who announced the birth of our Saviour to his mother. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of David for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* I may add the prediction of Isaiah. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."† The Seventy-second Psalm begins with a prayer of David for himself and his son; but Solomon, if he thought of him at all, immediately vanishes from his mind, and he goes on to describe, in the sublimest strains, the future glories of the Messiah's reign. This is the king to whose manifestation the prophecies directed the attention of the Jews, and under whose administration they were taught to expect that substantial and unfading felicity, of which earthly things were only a shadow. And as he was the Son of David by way of eminence, and was appointed to sit upon his throne, he sometimes receives in prophecy the name of that monarch, of whom he is the antitype. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."‡

Having seen that, in his human nature, the Messiah was to be a member of the family of David, we shall find, in the following prophecy, something still more specific. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel."|| The Messiah would be a miraculous child, born of one of the daughters of David according to a peculiar law. The miracle consisted, not in the exertion of extraordinary power, but in the manner of his conception; for the difference between a miracle and a common event is, that in the latter the hand of God is concealed from superficial observers by the means which it employs, whereas, in the former it is openly revealed. The birth of every child is effected by the same power which formed the body of our Saviour in the womb of the Virgin Mary; but in the latter case, it strikes us more, because it is unaccompanied with the usual

* Luke i. 32, 33.

† Is. ix. 7.

‡ Hos. iii. 5.

|| Is. vii. 14.

circumstances. Omnipotence appears unveiled, and admiration is excited by the naked display of it.

It will be proper to inquire into the reason of this miracle ; and we feel desirous to know how it came to pass, that the human nature of our Saviour was so different from that of all other men, in its perfect exemption from moral impurity. The common opinion is, that its holiness was the consequence of his being born of a virgin ; and it is explained in the following manner. Let us look back to the introduction of sin, and attend to the way in which it is propagated. In consequence of the federal relation between Adam and his posterity, his sin is chargeable upon them, and is transmitted to them as they successively come into existence. The nature which they derive from him is corrupt. They are at once guilty and polluted. From this law of transmission there has been no exception since the beginning of the world. The individuals of the human race have been distinguished by important differences in their talents, their dispositions, and their actions, but all have been tainted with sin, because they have all borne the same relation to that one man, with whom they were appointed to stand or fall. He was the representative of his natural posterity, or of all who should descend from him in consequence of the blessing pronounced upon the man and the woman : “ Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.” In the representation of Adam, every person was included, who was to be born according to the law of generation then established. Had our blessed Lord been born according to the same law, he also would have partaken of the general corruption ; and being himself a sinner, would have been disqualified to be the Saviour of sinners. Now, the design of his miraculous conception was, to secure the innocence of his human nature, that it might be fitted for the high honour of union to his Divine person, and for the holy services which were to be performed for the salvation of men. He was born of a virgin, that he might be an immaculate child. He was derived from Adam in a new channel, by which depravity could not be transmitted.

But it is a more satisfactory view of the subject to consider, that the miraculous birth of our Saviour was the consequence of a promise made after Adam had ceased to be a fe-

deral head, the promise, namely, respecting "the seed of the woman." He was not related to Adam while he continued the representative of his descendants, and was not therefore subject to the effects of his fall. His relation to him, if I may speak so, was incidental and conditional, depending upon the failure of Adam to fulfil the terms of the covenant. Christ was one added to the human race, after it had been brought into new circumstances, and he was not therefore bound by the law under which it was originally placed. It was not by an act of power in his miraculous conception, but by an act of justice, that he was exempted from the common depravity. He had no connexion with its cause; he was not more included in the representation of Adam than the angels of heaven; he would not have been born at all, if the covenant had not been broken; and that it is not our simple descent from Adam, which is the reason of the corruption of our nature, but our relation to him as our federal head, is evident from this consideration, that only his first sin is imputed to us, and all his subsequent sins were charged upon himself alone.

This I consider as the true account of the purity of the human nature of our Saviour. It was not owing simply to his being born of a virgin, although this is commonly assigned as the cause, but to his not being included in the representation of Adam. But all were included in it who were derived from him by the ordinary mode of continuing the species; and hence it was necessary that, in order to distinguish him, our Lord, who never was in Adam as a federal head, should descend from him in a miraculous manner.

We have seen that the notices of the Messiah in his human character, became clearer and more particular in every stage; but the ancient church was favoured with still more ample information. His Divinity was the subject of revelation, as well as his humanity, in a variety of passages. I shall mention, in the first place, the prophecy which we have just now considered, and in which, after it is foretold that he should be born of a virgin, it is added, that his name should be called Immanuel. This is a compound Hebrew word, which signifies "God with us." It is not meant that he should actually bear this name, but that he should be what it imports. Accordingly, he never was called Immanuel by any evangelist or

apostle, but he truly was God in our nature, manifested for our salvation. His Divinity was also declared in the following words: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."* He is a child, and the mighty God; born, yet possessed of eternal existence. To the same purpose is this other prediction; "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness."† The original word is *JEHOVAH*, which is the incommunicable name, and, being applied to our Saviour, intimates that he is the living, self-existent one. Let it be observed that, while this passage asserts his Divinity, it points out the inestimable benefit which would accrue to mankind from his manifestation in their nature, as through him they should obtain the blessing of justification, and by his obedience many should be made righteous.

It would be tedious to refer to all the notices of the Messiah which are contained in the Old Testament. As I have laid before you predictions and declarations respecting his person, so I might proceed to collect testimonies to the whole work which he would perform, to his humiliation, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his power, the progress and final triumph of his religion. But, passing these, I observe, that an expectation was excited of a great deliverer, who would appear in a future age to accomplish the redemption of the people of God. He was known by various titles, as the Redeemer, the Messenger of the Lord of hosts, He that should come, and the Messiah. This last title signifies the anointed one, as *Christ* does in Greek; and was given to him to denote his divine appointment to his office, and his qualifications for it. In ancient times, the pouring of oil upon them was a rite used in the consecration of kings, priests, and prophets. In allusion to it he is called the Messiah, because he was set apart to the office of Mediator by God himself,

* Is. ix. 6.

† Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

and was endowed with all the gifts and graces which were necessary to the performance of its duties. Hence he is said to have been anointed with the Holy Ghost, whom God gave not to him by measure. The notions entertained by the Jews at the time of his manifestation, were exceedingly erroneous. They seem to have lost sight of his Divinity, and to have imagined that he would be a mere man. They had overlooked the prophetic descriptions of his sufferings, and fixed their attention upon the splendid imagery in which his triumph was announced; they waited with impatience for the advent of a great temporal monarch, and were ready to march under his banners to victory and glory. Their misapprehension of his character was not owing to the obscurity or ambiguity of prophecy, but to their own carnal minds, which dwelt with fondness upon those parts of the description which flattered their passions and sordid views, and turned away with disgust from the lowly scenes amidst which his career was to commence. They had no wish to be saved from any enemies, but those by whose power their nation was oppressed; and set no value upon any blessings, but such as would minister to their sensuality and ambition. Hence, when the Messiah did come, they rejected him. Rulers and people, learned and unlearned, joined in an outcry against him as guilty of presumption in claiming this character; and the false charge has been transmitted from father to son during a long series of years. The mention of his name still kindles the rage of the Jews; and, with impious lips, they pour curses upon him, leaving it to the Gentiles to hail him in the language of their fathers, "Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Let us, therefore, proceed to shew that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah.

It is evident that the Messiah must have long since appeared, since the time fixed by prophecy for his manifestation is past, as even the Jews are constrained to acknowledge. It is a pitiful evasion to allege, as they do, that his coming has been delayed on account of their sins. In what place of Scripture is it suspended upon their repentance and obedience? Can any thing be more absurd than to assign, as a reason for not sending him, the only cause for which God promised to send him at all, namely, the sins of men, which

were to be expiated by his immaculate sacrifice? "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come."* But the sceptre has departed from Judah, the civil constitution of the Jews has been overthrown, and for many ages they have remained without a priest or a king. At the time when he whom we call the Messiah was born, they were under the dominion of Herod, an Idumean, but a proselyte to their religion, and therefore accounted one of themselves; their ancient forms were retained, they were governed by their own laws, and had rulers of their own nation. The sceptre had not departed, but it was at the point of departing; and this, therefore, was the critical moment at which the prophecies must either be fulfilled, or fail for ever; for, before the century expired, Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans, the people were expelled from their country, and scattered over the face of the earth. The dispersion of the Jews, which has lasted for more than seventeen hundred years, might convince them that the Messiah is come, and that they look in vain for another.

It was foretold that he should come while the second temple was standing. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."† These words were addressed to the Jews, who, after their return from the Babylonian captivity, were much discouraged by the difficulties which they experienced in building the temple, and by its inferiority to that which was erected by Solomon. It is predicted that it should be more glorious, not, however, by its external magnificence, but by the personal presence of Him, of whom the Schechinah, or the bright cloud which rested on the propitiatory, was a figure. "The Lord, whom ye seek," said another prophet, "shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."‡ The house which the Jews, after their restoration, constructed for the solemn worship of God, was repaired, and in a manner rebuilt, by Herod the Great, in whose reign our Saviour was born; but it was never called or accounted

* Gen. xlix. 10.

† Hag. ii. 9.

‡ Mal. iii. 1.

a new temple, because the work was carried on by degrees, and the regular service was not interrupted. Ages have elapsed since it was laid in ruins. It perished in the overthrow of the city by the Romans, its walls were levelled with the ground, its very foundation was turned up, and the prediction was literally fulfilled, that not one stone should be left upon another. The Messiah, therefore, is come; and what the prophets had announced was accomplished, when the Son of Mary was presented to God in the temple, and afterwards in that place published the tidings of peace and salvation. The Jews saw only a man in homely attire, and without any worldly pretensions; but never was the temple the scene of such glory as now, when the God of the temple stood within its walls.

There is a prophecy in the book of Daniel, which fixes the time of his appearance with greater exactness. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.—And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." * Different opinions have been entertained with respect to the commencement of these seventy weeks of years. According to Prideaux, who supports his opinion by many learned arguments, they are to be dated from the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, when a decree went forth from that monarch to Ezra, to restore the nation and church of the Jews; and the seven weeks, or forty-nine years, extend from that period to the time of Nehemiah, when the walls of Jerusalem were finished, and the affairs of the nation were settled. The sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years,

* Dan. ix. 24—27.

fill up the interval between Nehemiah and the appearance of the Baptist ; and the one week, or the last seven years, were employed in the ministration of John and our Saviour. In the course of that week, or rather in the latter half of it, he made the sacrifice and the oblation to cease by his own death, which fulfilled the types, and was followed by the abolition of the ceremonial law. It is evident from this prophecy, that the Messiah is come ; and the evidence is so clear, that the Jews are thrown into the utmost perplexity by it, and not knowing what answer to give to the arguments of Christians, wish to preserve silence on the subject, and pronounce a curse upon the man who shall presume to calculate the weeks of Daniel.

That the Messiah, whose advent is past, is Jesus of Nazareth, may be proved by the exact correspondence between his character and history, and the particulars mentioned in prophecy. He was of the tribe of Judah and the family of David, as we learn from his genealogy in Matthew and Luke ; and these points, I believe, have not been disputed. In legal reckoning he was the son of Joseph, but in reality he was the son of Mary. The descent of Joseph from David is traced in Matthew, and of Mary in Luke, although her name does not occur in it. In this way we account for the difference in the two genealogical tables, which, while both point out David as his progenitor, do not agree in one particular with respect to the intermediate persons. Now, unless we were to suppose the evangelists to have written at random, this difference is a proof that, having the same object in view, namely, to shew that he was of the royal family, they prove it, the one by the lineage of his reputed father, and the other by that of his mother.

The place of his birth was Bethlehem, according to the prediction of Micah: "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." * And how was this prophecy fulfilled ? Joseph and Mary had taken up their residence in Nazareth of Galilee, which lay at least seventy miles north from Jerusalem, while Bethlehem

* Micah v. 2.

was situated some miles to the south. Had the pious pair, when the time drew near that Mary should be delivered, gone intentionally to the appointed place, the truth of prophecy would have been established by their voluntary agency. But it does not appear that they had formed such a design, or that the propriety of it had ever occurred to them. God had purposed to accomplish his word, not by the instrumentality of persons who should knowingly co-operate with him, but by a man who was ignorant of prophecy, and had never heard of the Messiah. Augustus, sitting on the throne of the Roman world, issues a decree that all his subjects should be taxed or enrolled. The design of Cæsar is to replenish his treasury with their silver and gold, or to ascertain their number and wealth, that he may be acquainted with his resources against any future emergency. The design of God is to bring Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, to which the descendants of David were commanded to repair, that their names might be inserted in the family register. Augustus thought only of gratifying his avarice or ambition : God thought of fulfilling his word. We see the whole empire in motion, and thousands hastening, every man to his own city, at the command of their Sovereign, and we are apt to look upon this mighty bustle merely as a political movement. But God is the prime mover, and his object is to conduct, without noise and without a miracle, two of the humblest of the Emperor's subjects to a small city, in a distant province, because he had determined, and by the mouths of his prophets had foretold, that there the Messiah should be born.

As his birth corresponded, in all its circumstances, with the ancient predictions, so did every other particular in his history. Our limits will not permit me to enter into a minute detail. According to the descriptions of the prophets, there would be a wonderful mixture in his character, of humiliation and greatness, of suffering and triumph. To the Jews, who have adopted false notions respecting his person and work, the language of the Old Testament is a riddle which they are sadly puzzled to explain ; and hence some of their Doctors have had recourse to the supposition of two Messiahs, to whom they assign the different parts of the description, as it seems impossible that they should admit of an application to the

same individual. The one will be of the tribe of Ephraim, and will suffer and die ; the other will be of the tribe of Judah, and will conquer and reign. I need not spend a single moment in refuting an hypothesis which is supported solely by the authority of men, whose comments on Scripture furnish the most pitiable display of ignorance and stupidity which the world ever saw. The character of Jesus of Nazareth affords a full solution of the difficulty, which has compelled them to have recourse to this wretched expedient. In his human nature, which, like ours, existed at first in the feebleness of infancy, and when it grew up to manhood, was placed in circumstances of poverty and degradation, we see the fulfilment of what had been spoken concerning his humiliation ; and the predictions of his greatness are accomplished in the dignity of his person, which, although made flesh, and concealed in a great measure from the eyes of men, retained the glory which it had with the Father before the world began. The incompatibility of his sufferings with his triumph, exists only in the dreams of the Jews. They were not simultaneous, but successive ; his course commenced in darkness, and ended in light ; he first became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and then he obtained a name above every name, which all the powers of earth and heaven adore. He sits at the right hand of his Father, and his enemies are made his footstool. It were easy to shew, by a reference to the prophecies, that there is not one particular of his sufferings recorded by the Evangelists, which had not been pointed out beforehand ; so that there is not a mere resemblance between the character of Jesus Christ, and that of the Messiah, but an exact coincidence ; a coincidence in so many minute circumstances, that it could not have taken place by accident, and can be explained only by the identity of the person. It could not happen by chance that, agreeably to the ancient predictions, he was betrayed by one of his own followers, sold for thirty pieces of silver, buffeted, scourged, and spit upon ; that he was condemned by the common consent of his own countrymen and the Gentiles ; that he was put to death by crucifixion which was not a Jewish punishment, and in company with criminals ; that vinegar was given to him during his last sufferings, and his clothes were partly divided, and

partly disposed of by lot; that he was insulted by his enemies, and, in particular, derided for his faith; that he was pierced with a spear; and finally, that, although it was intended to bury him along with his fellow-sufferers, his body was deposited in the sepulchre of a rich man. It would have required the co-operation of many persons to bring all these circumstances together by design; but as the agents had nothing in view, except to gratify their own feelings, we perceive the hand of God pointing out his own Son as the object of our faith, by fulfilling whatsoever his counsel had determined before to be done.

The Messiahship of Jesus is farther manifest from the wonderful works which he performed. These prove that he was the expected Redeemer, because it was foretold that his advent should be signalized by works at once beneficent and divine: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." * Hence the Jews expected such signs to be exhibited by the Messiah, as we learn from the words of some of them who believed in him, and said, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" † But farther, these miracles prove him to be the Messiah, because they were express attestations to his character by his Father, in concurrence with whom he performed them. Hence he appeals to them as such: "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me." ‡ And again, when the Jews were filled with indignation, and threatened to stone him, because he called himself the Son of God, he said to them, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." || The argument from miracles is well understood. Whether we consider those of our Saviour as performed by his own power, or by that of his Father, we arrive at the same conclusion. If they

* Is. xxxv. 4—6. † John vii. 31. ‡ Ib. v. 36, 37. || Ib. x. 37, 38.

were performed by his own power, they prove that he was a Divine person, to whose declarations concerning himself, implicit confidence is due. If they were performed by the power of his Father, they were his solemn attestation to the mission and doctrine of Christ. The allegation of the Jews, that his miracles were wrought by the assistance of evil spirits, had no better foundation than their ignorance and malignity; their ignorance—in supposing that those spirits could perform real miracles, and particularly such miracles as displayed an uncontrolled dominion over all nature; their malignity—in ascribing to them, in opposition to the clearest dictates of reason and religion, works confessedly benevolent and holy. Certainly they would not have changed the course of nature to advance the glory of God, and the best interests of the human race. The answer of our Saviour must have carried conviction to any candid mind: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.” *

The last argument by which we prove that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, is founded on the success of his religion. Let us reflect upon the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The Author of it was a person rejected by the only nation which expected the Messiah, and knew any thing about his character; and, by that nation, he was not only pronounced to be a deceiver, but subjected to an ignominious death; so that there was every human probability that his name would be soon forgotten, or be remembered only as an object of reproach. No person could have dreamed, that a man who had been crucified as a malefactor in a distant province, would acquire such posthumous fame, as to be acknowledged and adored in the proud capital of Rome, and throughout the whole extent of the empire: whether we consider the nature of his doctrine, the persons who were employed in preaching it, or the opposition which it had to encounter, there was no likelihood that it would ever attain a footing in the world; and still less, that it would become the dominant religion. His doctrine was offensive to all classes of men, because it inter-

* Luke xi. 17, 18.

ferred with their opinions and usages, and called upon them, not only to adopt a new creed, but to engage in a new course of life, to which they felt the utmost repugnance. The preachers could not give it the recommendation, which a system derives from the rank and authority of its patrons, and the eloquence and learning which they enlist in its service; for they were of a low rank, and wanted all the qualifications which attract the notice and admiration of mankind. These were its only or its chief friends, when it appeared; all other men were leagued together as its enemies, the high, the mighty, and the wise; the rulers of states, and the interested ministers of the various superstitions which were established on the earth. In whatever way we may account for its wonderful success in circumstances which foreboded a certain failure, it supplies a new evidence in support of the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to the character of Messiah. If its success should be attributed to its intrinsic excellence, what but truth could take such hold of the minds and consciences of men, as to command their assent, notwithstanding strong motives to reject it? If we say that it was the effect of Divine power, exerted not only in miracles, but in secret influences upon the hearts of men, we acknowledge that the gospel is authenticated by the seal of God, and that he who preached it was his Son.

It deserves, in particular, to be considered, that the doctrine of Christ has been embraced by the Gentiles, and has caused a great revolution in the religious state of the world. The law of Moses was confined to the Jews, and a few proselytes who occasionally submitted to it; it was not intended to be universal, and its peculiar usages rendered it impossible that it should ever become the religion of mankind. But it was foretold of the Messiah, that he should be “a light to enlighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel;”* “the heathen would be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;”† “the isles would wait for his law;”‡ and, “from the rising of the sun, to the going down of the same, the name of God would be great among the Gentiles.”|| Of the fulfilment of these predictions, there was no appearance for

* Luke ii. 32.

† Ps. ii. 8.

‡ Is. xlii. 4.

|| Mal. i. 11.

many centuries after they were uttered ; but they have been fulfilled since the coming of our Saviour. As he gave a commission to the Apostles to preach the gospel to every creature, and they extended their labours beyond the limits of Judea, so his religion has ever since been professed by nations converted from heathenism. By the propagation of the gospel, the ancient idolatry has been overthrown, the knowledge of the true God has been diffused, and his worship established ; his law has been promulgated as the only standard of right and wrong, and men have been taught to expect salvation only through his crucified Son. His kingdom does not yet extend “ from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth ;” but what has been accomplished, encourages us to hope for greater things ; and we look forward to the time when he shall achieve the conquest of the whole earth, and be acknowledged and honoured as universal Lord.

These are the principal arguments by which we prove, against the Jews, that Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. I have omitted many particulars which might have been introduced under the general heads, and given you only a superficial view of the subject. What has been said, is sufficient to confirm our faith in this fundamental article of our religion.—The character of Messiah includes several offices to which our Saviour was anointed, and by the execution of which he accomplishes the salvation of his people. These we shall afterwards consider ; but, in the meantime, it is necessary to inquire into the mysterious constitution of his person, by which he was qualified for those offices, and which is intimately connected with his Messiahship, in the creed and confession of the Church. “ We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” * This important point will be the subject of the next Lecture.

* John vi. 69.

LECTURE LIII.

ON THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST.—HERETICAL OPINIONS RESPECTING IT.—INTEGRITY OF IT.—ITS SINLESSNESS.—NECESSITY OF HIS ASSUMPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.—THE CONSTITUTION OF HIS PERSON, BY THE UNION OF THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES.—EFFECTS OF THIS HYPOSTATICAL UNION.

HAVING proved that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised to the Fathers, I proceed to speak of his person, before I enter upon the consideration of his particular offices. To a Jew, it would seem that this inquiry is unnecessary, or may be reduced to narrow limits, it being enough to know his human descent, as there is no distinction between him and other men, except in his high destination, his superior endowments, and his splendid achievements. Some professed Christians are of the same opinion, and maintain, that he who was born in the fulness of time, was in every respect a man like ourselves. It is certain, however, that the expectations of the ancient people of God pointed to a nobler object, in consequence of the declarations of the prophets, that the Redeemer of Israel should be one who might “be called JEHOVAH our righteousness,” and “Immanuel,” which signifies, “God with us.” Our own Scriptures are still more explicit, and, in language which does not admit of a figurative interpretation, inform us, that it was the Word who “was God,” and “by whom all things were created,” that was “made flesh and dwelt among us ;” that it was the Son of God who

was made of a woman ; and that he who came of the Jews, according to the flesh, was “ God over all, blessed for ever.” These, and many other passages, import that in him the Divine and the human nature were united ; so that of the same person it may be affirmed with truth, that he is the fellow or the equal of the Lord of hosts, and the kinsman and brother of the children of the dust.

This article of our religion has been opposed with great violence in every age, and by heretics of various descriptions. It is the rock on which the Church is built, and the powers of darkness have exerted their utmost efforts to overthrow it. It is not necessary to review those opinions, which aimed at subverting the foundations of our faith by denying the Divinity of Christ, whether he was affirmed by the Ebionites, and others, to be a mere man, *ψιλὸς ἀνθρώπος*, or at a later period by the Arians, to be a secondary Deity ; because we have formerly proved that he is God, equal to the Father. Our present design only requires that we should take notice of the errors which immediately related to the constitution of his person as *θεανθρώπος*, God and man.

Let us begin with the consideration of the nature which he assumed. And here we are met by two opinions which were vented in the primitive times, in opposition to the common faith of Christians, founded on the authority of Scripture. The first is that of the Docetæ, who were so called on account of their distinguishing tenet, that our Saviour was not a man in reality, but in appearance only. It was held by different individuals and sects ; but, as they concurred in this opinion with respect to the Christ, they received in ancient times this common designation. According to them, what was supposed to be the man Christ Jesus, was a mere phantom, and his crucifixion was a scenical representation, by which the senses of the spectators were imposed upon. It surely is not necessary to attempt an elaborate refutation of a heresy so manifestly contrary to the most explicit declarations of Scripture. “ Forasmuch,” says an Apostle, “ as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.” * There is no reason why we should listen for a moment to men who give the lie direct to

* Heb. ii. 14.

an inspired writer, and would persuade us that, for the space of more than thirty years, God, for no conceivable end, deceived the Jewish nation by a series of miracles, (for it was only by miracle that they could be made for so long a time to think that a shadow was a solid substance ;) and that our hope of salvation by the death of our Redeemer is vain, as he did not shed his blood for us, and, in truth, had no blood to shed. The second opinion, destructive of the human nature of Christ, is said to have been maintained by Arius and Eunomius, who affirmed that he had a body, but not a soul, and that the Logos, or his superior nature, supplied its place. Apollinaris, or Apollinarius, also taught that the Son of God assumed manhood without a soul, *ψυχῆς ἀνευ*, as Socrates relates ; but afterwards, changing his mind, he said that he assumed a soul, but that it did not possess the intelligent or rational principle, *νοῦν δὲ οὐκ εἶχειν αὐτὴν* ; and that the *λογος* was instead of that principle, *αὐτὶ νοῦν*.^{*} Human nature he conceived to consist of three parts, a body, a soul, and a mind, of which the latter was wanting in our Saviour. The contrariety of both opinions to Scripture is apparent, and particularly of the former, which affirms that he had no soul. Besides that it is expressly mentioned by himself, when he said in his agony, “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,”[†] and when, on the cross, he committed it to his Father, there is the same evidence that he possessed this essential part of our nature, as there is that it belongs to any other man ; his thoughts, his reasonings, his feelings, his affections, his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, being all indications of the existence of that living and intelligent principle, of the operation of which we are conscious in ourselves, and to which we give the name of the soul. It was impossible that the Divine nature was in him instead of a soul, because it is omniscient, and there were some things of which he declared himself to be ignorant, and because his sufferings, and fears, and sorrows, were incompatible with the perfect felicity of which it is immutably possessed. Can we conceive the Divine nature to have been in an agony, and to have exclaimed, “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?”[‡]

^{*} Socrat. Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. c. 44. [†] Mat. xxvi. 38. [‡] Ib. xxvii. 46.

We conclude, therefore, in opposition to those heresies, that our Redeemer assumed a complete human nature; or, as our Catechism expresses it, with its usual accuracy, that he took to himself "a true body and a reasonable soul." In the ancient creed which goes under the name of Athanasius, he is said to have been "not only perfect God, but perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

While we maintain the integrity of his human nature, we admit that he assumed it with all its sinless infirmities. These may be comprehended in the word *flesh*, which is used by the Evangelist John, in speaking of his incarnation; at least the word suggests this idea in other places where it occurs. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh."* "He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again."† In both passages the term seems to represent man as a being frail and mortal. Our Redeemer was not subject to any of the sinful infirmities of our nature, to sensual appetites and transports of passion; nor was there any stimulus or incentive to sin in the constitution or temperament of his body. The Scripture is careful, when it asserts his conformity to us in other things, to make this important exception. "He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin."‡ He was subject to none of those diseases which are the portion of man, who is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards. Infirmities of this kind would have incommoded him in the discharge of his duty, and he was exempted from them on account of his personal purity. But he was subject to hunger and thirst, to cold, and heat, and weariness, to pain of body arising from external injuries, and to distress of mind from the experience or apprehension of evil, and from the effects produced upon his feelings by the scenes with which he was surrounded. Although living in our world, he might have been defended against every annoyance by the order of Omnipotence, as an angel of heaven would be, were he to descend to the earth, and sojourn in it for a season; but such a state would not have accorded with the design of his mission. He submitted to our infirmities, that he might acquire an experimental knowledge of our sufferings, corporeal and mental, and we

* Gen. vi. 3.

• Ps. lxxviii. 39.

‡ Heb. iv. 15.

might be more fully assured of his sympathy; besides that it was only by his tears, and agony, and death, that the great work of our redemption could be accomplished. "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are." *

Before we proceed farther, the question occurs, What was the reason that the Son of God assumed the nature of man? Some of the Schoolmen were so bold as to affirm, that he would have assumed it, although man had not sinned. I do not know what arguments they advanced in support of this opinion, nor is it necessary to inquire, because, without hearing them, we may confidently pronounce that they are unsatisfactory and false. Their philosophy, such as it was, could give them no assistance in a matter of pure revelation; and every thing which the Scriptures say upon the subject, directly tends to the opposite conclusion. He became man for the redemption of men, the assumption of our nature being necessary to prepare him for those services and sufferings by which alone we could be redeemed. "Verily," says Paul, "he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." † The word which we translate, *took on him*, or *assumed*, signifies *to take hold of*, *to assist*, or *to help*, and was so understood by the Greek commentators, the most competent judges. The true sense of the passage, I apprehend, is, that the Son of God interposed for the deliverance, not of angels, but of men; and the nature of his interposition is stated in the preceding verses. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," that is, he helped man by becoming a man. It is related by Cæsar, that it was an opinion of the Gauls, "that unless the life of man was given for the life of man, the immortal gods could not be appeased." || It would be absurd to quote their sentiments in support of a doctrine of revelation, especially as they founded upon them the cruel and detestable practice of human sacrifices; but it is worthy of attention, that they had adopted an idea which in general was true, and was the reason of the great mystery which we are at present considering, the incarnation of our Saviour. If an atonement was necessary, we

* Heb. iv. 15. † Heb. ii. 16. ‡ Ib. 14. || De Bell. Gall. lib. vi.

cannot conceive it to have been made by the sufferings of any other nature than that which had incurred the penalty of sin. No such relation could have been established between two beings of totally different natures, between a man and an angel, that, in consequence of it, what was done by the latter should have been accepted, as if it had been done by the former. We can understand how the services of an individual may be admitted as an equivalent for the services of the whole class to which he belongs; but there is no principle on which we could account for the same mode of estimating the services of an individual of a different class. If an angel had suffered, there would have been no display of the righteousness of God, as, in that case, the nature which had sinned would have escaped with impunity. It behoved the surety, in this case, to be closely allied to the debtors, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh, that he might be identified with them in legal reckoning.

To this argument for the incarnation of our Saviour it may be objected, that God might have saved us without satisfaction to his justice, and, consequently, that there was no absolute necessity for the manifestation of his Son in the flesh. He might have freely pardoned our sins, bestowed blessings upon us unbought and unsolicited, and admitted us to communion without a mediator. Some have hazarded this opinion, which is as little distinguished by modesty as by reverence for Scripture. It imports that the mission of Jesus Christ was gratuitous in every sense; that without any sufficient reason he was subjected to sorrow and death; that there has been a theatrical display of the severity of divine justice, to persuade us that it is inflexible and inexorable, while it would not have been dishonoured, although sin had been permitted to pass with impunity; and that the love of God is not so wonderful as we were wont to believe, because its greatest gift might have been withheld without at all hindering our salvation. Such consequences will justify us in rejecting this opinion, especially when we consider that it does not find the shadow of support in the Scriptures, and rests on no more solid basis than the speculations of presumptuous men.

The necessity of the incarnation farther appears from the nature of the sufferings which our Redeemer had to endure.

They were sufferings which would atone for the guilt of the people of God from the beginning to the end of the world. These were not easy to be borne. Human nature, unsupported by superior power, would have sunk under them. They would have crushed the mightiest of our race; they would have overwhelmed the highest angel in irretrievable misery. As it was necessary, therefore, that the penalty of the law should be inflicted on the nature which had sinned, so it was necessary that that nature should be so sustained in the dreadful enterprise, as, although bruised and broken, not to be utterly destroyed. The Son of God united it to himself; he was present with it more intimately than he is with the angels of heaven; he upheld it by the power of his Divinity; and hence, although the man Christ Jesus was in such an agony, that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, he bore all his woes with invincible fortitude, and closed the scene with the words of triumph on his expiring lips: "It is finished."

The assumption of our nature by the Son of God is expressed in the Scriptures, by his "partaking of our flesh and blood," by his "being made flesh," and by his "being manifested in the flesh." The Greek writers call it *ανθρωπησις*, *ενανθρωπησις*, *ενσωματωσις*, and *ενσαρκωσις*; of which last term, the ecclesiastical Latin word *incarnatio*, which we have adopted into our language, is a literal translation. The act by which the union was formed, we cannot explain; but it constituted such a relation between him and our nature, that it is now as really his nature as is the Divine. He is as truly man as he is God. This peculiar relation was indispensably necessary to the unity of the Mediator. Had the two natures, however intimately connected, not been personally united, their actions would not have been referrible to one Agent; there would have been two agents perfectly distinct, whereas now the person of Christ, if I may so express myself, is one principle of operation in the accomplishment of our redemption.

To illustrate this point more fully, I remark that it was not a human person which our Saviour assumed, but a human nature. The distinction between these is important, and should be carefully considered. By a person, we understand

an intelligent being subsisting by himself, and not dependent upon any other. This is the meaning of the word when it is used in reference to men ; when applied to the Trinity, it expresses a distinction which we cannot explain. To say that the Son of God assumed a human person, would be an express contradiction, because there is an idea imported in the word assumed, with which the personality of his human nature is absolutely inconsistent ; for it imports that he made it his own ; and besides, on this supposition, as we have already remarked, the acts of the man would not have been the acts of the Son of God, and consequently would not have been available for our salvation. He assumed a human nature, or, in other words, made it his own nature, by giving it a subsistence in his Divine person. The term *personality* merely imports, that the nature of which we are speaking, subsists by itself. To deny, therefore, the personality of the human nature of Christ, takes nothing from it that is essential ; it simply represents it as standing in a peculiar relation to another nature. It would have been a person, if it had not been united to the Son of God ; but, being united to him, it cannot be called a person, because it does not subsist by itself, as other men do ; each of whom has an independent existence. "The Son of God," says our church, "became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man, in one person for ever." And the Athanasian creed affirms, that "although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ."

When, in speaking upon this subject, we use the phrase, the constitution of the person of Christ, it is necessary to guard against a misapprehension of the meaning. It is not that his person is made up of two constituent parts, the Divine and the human nature ; for this would imply that the Son of God was not a person before the union, or that he became a different person after it. The union of the soul and the body is the object in nature which most resembles it, particularly in this respect, that, as these compose one individual, what is said of either of them may be predicated of that individual ; and, in like manner, what is affirmed of either of the natures of Christ, may be affirmed of Christ himself. But the resemblance is not exact ; for neither the soul nor the body is a person by itself, but the Divine nature of our Saviour had a

personal subsistence prior to its union to the human. His person is not a compound person ; the personality belongs to his Godhead, and the human nature subsists in it by a peculiar dispensation. The assumption of our nature caused no change in his person ; it added nothing to it ; and the only difference is, that the same person, who was always possessed of Divinity, has now taken humanity.

It was the Second Person of the Trinity who alone was incarnate, as is evident from the Scriptures. It was the " Word" who " was made flesh," the " Son" who was " sent forth in the fulness of time, made of a woman." The incarnation was a personal act, and was therefore limited to the person, whose act it was. We say, indeed, that the Divine nature was incarnate ; but we speak of it not *immediately*, to adopt the language of scholastic Theology, and as it is considered absolutely and in itself, but *mediately* in the person of the Son, or as far as it is determined and characterised in the person of the Son. The incarnation was not an act of the Divine nature, but of a person in that nature, and therefore terminated upon that person alone. The whole Divine nature may be said to have been incarnate ; but this is true only because the whole Divine nature is in the Second Person of the Godhead. In this way we may explain our meaning ; but I am not sure that any distinct idea will be conveyed into the mind of the hearer. If the Divine nature is in all the persons of the Trinity, we cannot understand how the incarnation was the act of one, and not of all ; and the reason is, that we do not understand in what their personal distinction consists : yet we are certain that there is such a distinction, in consequence of which some acts are ascribed to one person, and others to another ; and, in particular, that it was the Son who assumed our nature, and not the Father, or the Holy Ghost, although both concurred in this act ; the Father by his appointment and approbation, and the Holy Ghost by his immediate agency in the miraculous conception.

This doctrine concerning the person of Christ was opposed by two heresies, which were broached in the fifth century, and, after much disputation and confusion, terminated in the separation of their respective adherents from the communion of the catholic church. The first was the heresy of Nestorius,

bishop of Constantinople, who is said to have taught that there are two persons in Christ, a Divine and a human. It originated in the conduct of one of his Presbyters named Anastasius, who publicly condemned the title of *θεοτοκος*, or Mother of God, which was frequently given to the Virgin Mary, because, as he said, she was a woman, and of a woman God could not be born. He was supported by Nestorius, who zealously taught the same doctrine, and maintained that she should be called only *χριστοτοκος*, or the Mother of Christ. A great clamour was immediately raised; suspicions were entertained, that he denied the Divinity of Christ; his enemies eagerly laid hold of the opportunity to humble and overwhelm him; and the affair having been brought before a council assembled at Ephesus, A. D. 431, his heresy was condemned, and it was declared, “that Christ was one Divine person, in whom two natures were most closely united, but without being mixed or confounded together.” Not a few of the moderns are of opinion, that his sentiments were misunderstood and misrepresented during the violence of the controversy. Men do not always admit all the consequences which others draw from their opinions, nor even all which may be legitimately deduced. It is acknowledged by some ancient writers, and particularly by the historian Socrates,* that he was sound in his views of the Trinity, and consequently of the Divinity of Christ. He himself denied the charges which were fixed upon him by his enemies, and in one of his Epistles virtually maintains the doctrine of his opponents, when he says, that Christ is a name significant of an impassible and a passible essence in one person, and that he acknowledged in him *ἐν προσωπον*. Hence it is not improbable that he and his opponents agreed in sentiment, and differed only in words. The controversy, however, gave rise to a sect called by his name, which held this unscriptural doctrine, “that there were two persons in our Saviour, the one Divine and the other human; that a union was formed between the Son of God, and the Son of man, in the moment of the virgin’s conception, and will never be dissolved; that it was not, however, a union of nature or of person, but only of will and affection; that Christ was therefore to be carefully distinguished from God, who dwelt in him as

* Socrat. Hist. Eccles. Lib. vii. c. 32.

in his temple ; and that Mary was to be called the mother of Christ, and not the mother of God."

It is not necessary to engage in a formal confutation of this heresy, which expressly contradicts the passages formerly quoted and others which affirm, that the " Word was made flesh ;" that he who was " in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man ;" that the Son of God was " made of a woman ;" and that her child was " God with us ;" all which assert, as clearly as words can do, the unity of his person. Were the doctrine of the Nestorians true, the hope of the church founded on the Divinity of the Saviour would be vain ; for he who died upon the cross was a man, more highly exalted indeed than other men, but still a creature only, whose blood could not have atoned for the sins of the world.

The author of the other heresy was Eutyches, the abbot of a monastery in Constantinople, who expressed himself thus : " I acknowledge two natures in Christ before the union, but after the union I acknowledge only one nature." He did not specify the time when the union took place ; but some of his followers said, that it took place at the conception, some at the resurrection, and some at the ascension. His opinion seems to have been, that his human nature was absorbed by the Divine, and that the Divine nature alone remained. It underwent modifications by those who succeeded him, some of whom chose to say, " that in the Son of God there was one nature, which, notwithstanding its unity, was double and compounded ;" while others, who assumed the name of Monophysites, laid down this proposition, " that the Divine and human nature of Christ were so united as to form only one nature, yet without any change, confusion, or mixture of the two natures." The heresy of Eutyches was condemned by the council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451, which promulgated the following decree, as expressive of the faith which all Christians should hold, " that in Christ two distinct natures were united in one person, without any change, mixture, or confusion."

The distinction of the two natures in Christ was manifest while he lived upon earth. As God, he knew all things, but as man, there were some things which he did not know ; as God, he was blessed for ever, but as man, he was acquainted

with grief; as God, he was the living One, but as man, he died upon the cross. That the distinction is continued in the heavenly state is certain from this fact, that "he will so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven;" * that is, will return in the human nature, and that he is the ordained man, by whom God will judge the world in righteousness. The absorption of the human nature by the Divine, or the mixture of the two natures, is perfectly unintelligible.

The ancient church maintained that the two natures of our Saviour were united, *ἀδιαίρετως* and *ἀχωρίστως*, *indivisibly and inseparably*, against the Nestorians, and *ἀτρέπτως* and *ἀσυγχύτως*, *without change and confusion*, against the Eutychians. In opposition to both, it is declared in the Athanasian creed, that "though our Saviour be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ, one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God, one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person; for, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Our own church teaches, "that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man."†

Let us now attend to the effects of the constitution of his person. The first effect which demands our attention, has been already noticed, namely, that, by the union of our nature to his Divine Person, it was qualified to accomplish our salvation. It was not like our nature in Adam, which, although perfectly innocent, and endowed with all holy dispositions, was fallible, and might be overcome by temptation; but it was supported by the Divine, and could not fail or be discouraged. While it was thus enabled to endure the arduous trial, a value accrued to its acts, which would not have belonged to them, although they had been performed by the highest creature in the universe; for they were the acts, not of the man alone, but of the Son of God, who was united to the man. When God says, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people,"‡ he

* Acts i. 11. † Westm. Conf. c. viii. §. 2. ‡ Ps. lxxxix. 19.

refers to the constitution of the Messiah's person; and the might which is ascribed to him, was not inherent in his human nature, but in the Divinity. This is evident, even to the adversaries of his Godhead, who, aware that upon their hypothesis he could not have performed the work which we assign to him, deny that he did perform it, or that he offered an atonement for sin; and even proceed so far as to affirm, that he was subject, not only to the sinless, but to the sinful infirmities of our nature. Indeed, a human Saviour might have taught us our duty, and communicated such revelations as God had empowered him to make; but he could not have averted the wrath of God from us, nor have restored us to his favour. Such a Saviour could not have been proposed as the object of religious confidence. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is."* The object of the faith of the ancient Church was the same Divine Redeemer who is exhibited to us as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who by himself purged our sins."† "Surely, shall one say, in JEHOVAH have I righteousness and strength; even to him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In JEHOVAH shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."‡

The second effect of the constitution of his person, is what the Greeks called *κοινωνια ιδιωμάτων*, and frequently *αντιδοσις ιδιωμάτων*. In our language, it is the communication of properties, by which Theologians mean, that, in consequence of the union of the two natures, the properties of both are ascribed to his person, or that the properties of one nature are ascribed to his person, when it is denominated from the other. It will make the matter more distinct to say, that the properties of one nature are predicated of the other, because both belong to his person. One of the Fathers gives the following example: "We may say concerning Christ, He who is our God, was seen by men, and conversed with them; and, This man was uncreated, impassible, and incomprehensible." The Scripture furnishes a variety of examples. The proper-

* Jer. xvii. 5, 7.

† Heb. i. 3.

‡ Is. xlv. 24, 25.

ties of the Divine nature are ascribed to the human, or to him in the human, when Peter said to him, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;"* and Thomas, "My Lord and my God."† Human properties are ascribed to the Divine nature, or to him as possessing the Divine, when it is said, that "the Lord of glory was crucified,"‡ and that "God purchased the Church with his own blood;"§ for, after all that Griesbach has alleged against it, the word *God*, in this last verse, is probably the true reading, and, as such, is retained by some eminent writers. The reason that, in both cases, the properties of one nature are attributed to another, is the identity of the person to whom they equally belong, and who may be described by the one or the other, as occasion requires.

This is the sense in which we speak of the communication of properties, as an effect of the hypostatical union. We do not mean, that the properties of one nature were really communicated to the other, but that, all being the properties of one person, they are predicated of him, as denominated sometimes by the one nature, and sometimes by the other. The subject, however, is not always so understood. The Lutherans maintain a real communication of properties from the one nature to the other, or, at least, from the Divine to the human. This opinion they have been led to adopt, with a view to support their peculiar ideas of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Renouncing transubstantiation, or the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, as held by the Church of Rome, they have embraced a dogma equally unintelligible, but more harmless in its consequences, namely, consubstantiation; which imports, according to the meaning of the term, that, although the elements are not changed into the substance of Christ, he is literally present in, with, and under them. Against this notion, it was an obvious objection, that such presence was impossible, as his human nature is in heaven. In attempting to evade this difficulty, they have furnished an illustration of the remark, that, if a man has told a lie, he must tell another to cover it, lest it should rain through; and they fairly admonish us to be cautious in adopting opinions, lest, finding ourselves involved in one absurdity, we be led into another,

* John xxi. 17.

† Ib. xx. 28.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

§ Acts xx. 28.

and then into a third, and all for the purpose of defending the first. Consubstantiation cannot be true, unless the human nature of our Saviour be present in all places ; but we know that a man cannot be in two places at the same time ; that he is a local being, necessarily confined to a particular spot, which he must leave, when he wishes to be in another. The Lutherans remove this impossibility by supposing another, namely, that the human nature of Christ is endowed, in consequence of the personal union, with the property of ubiquity, or that his Divine nature has communicated to it the attribute of omnipresence. It is the first step, as we say, in some cases, which is difficult ; the rest are easy. We are not, therefore, surprised that, having bestowed one Divine perfection upon the human nature of our Saviour, they should make a donation of others, and affirm, as some of them do, that it is also possessed of omniscience and omnipotence. I am not aware that it is necessary to discuss this strange and irrational doctrine. There are some opinions which confute themselves simply by being stated, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. It confounds the Divine and human nature of Christ, by assigning the same properties to both. It deifies the man Christ Jesus, and, consequently, makes him cease to be man ; it, in fact, represents him to be as truly God as the second Person of the Trinity. The Scripture points out, most clearly, the distinction between his natures ; and if in any case it seems, upon a superficial view, to confound them, the passages will be easily understood, by the principle of the communication of properties, in the sense already explained. The truth is, that it was neither the sense nor the sound of Scripture, which led the Lutherans to adopt their opinion ; it was, if I may speak so, a second thought, and was forced out of the Scripture, by perverting and torturing it, to support their foolish hypothesis respecting the Sacrament. Were they asked, what they mean by the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ ? I am persuaded that every intelligent person among them, speaking without prejudice, would acknowledge that he could not tell. A body can be present every where, only by being infinitely or indefinitely extended. Do they imagine, that the body of our Saviour is commensurate

with the universe, or even with this world? If they say so, do they affix any idea to their words? or can any person affix an idea to them?

The last effect of the hypostatical union, which I shall mention, is the honour which results from it to the human nature of our Saviour. This consists, primarily and chiefly, in the relation which it bears to the Divine nature. God is said to dwell in the saints, but not as he dwells in the man Christ Jesus. The union, in this case, is of a peculiar kind; no other man ever was, or ever will be, so united to the Godhead. He who is God, has made our nature his own. This is the highest honour which could be conferred upon a creature, and would be incredible, were we not assured of it by the Word himself, who was made flesh. By the assumption of our nature, it was exalted above all created beings. Angels were originally greater than man; but man is now elevated above them, that is, his nature has obtained a rank, which leaves the loftiest of the heavenly host at an immeasurable distance. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands."* A man now sits upon the throne of the universe, and exercises dominion over all things in heaven, in earth, and in hell; a man is appointed to be the Judge of the world. It is evident, however, that he could not have been invested with this authority, if he had not been also God; for the government and final judgment of the universe, manifestly require Divine perfections, the knowledge of all things, unerring wisdom, and almighty power.

It has been inquired, Whether the human nature of Christ is the object of religious worship? but I apprehend this question is not attended with much difficulty. We do, indeed, find the Church in heaven and on earth, and the angels who surround the throne, worshipping the Lamb that was slain, and ascribing to him blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; but we know that there is just ground for this homage in the Divine nature which he possessed with the Father before the world began. The formal reason of religious worship is the infinite excellence of him to whom it is

* Heb. ii. 7.

addressed. It is the want of this excellence which renders the worship of saints and angels idolatry. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only thou shalt serve." * It follows, therefore, that the human nature of Christ, although glorified above all conception, cannot be the formal object of worship, because it is a creature. The personal union did not deify it, but merely gave it a subsistence in the second Person of the Trinity. We worship him who is God and man, but we worship him because he is God. We pray to him, because, as God, he hears, and can help us; we wait on him, and obey him, because he is possessed of Divine power and authority. This is the proper reason of those acts of worship which we perform to the Son; but the consideration that he still wears our nature, in which he died upon the cross, and ascended to heaven, is a powerful motive to serve him, and our great encouragement to hope for acceptance. While we look up to him as one, who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and has a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, the awe with which the contemplation of his uncreated greatness would have inspired us, is abated, and we are emboldened to commit ourselves to his care, and confidently to expect his gracious aid in every time of need.

There is another question connected with the person of Christ, namely, Whether he is the object of worship as Mediator? Divines commonly answer this question in the negative, because, in this character, he is inferior to the Father, and because he is the medium through which our prayers are offered up, and our services are accepted. His inferiority is, perhaps, not a sufficient reason for excluding the Mediator from divine honours, because it is merely economical, and is consistent with his equality in all other respects. In thinking of his official character, we must not lose sight of his essential dignity. It is acknowledged, however, that the ordinary method of Christian worship is, to address the Father by the Son; to pray to the Father for blessings, and to plead the merit of the Son as the argument for obtaining them. "Through him, we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." † We come to the Father

* Matth. iv. 10.

† Eph. ii. 18.

through the mediation of the Son, and by the assistance of the Spirit. We do not usually pray to the Son, but to the Father in his name; yet prayers may be addressed to the Son, because he also is God, and ought, by the express command of the Father, to receive the same honour from men with himself; and although, to speak accurately, we pray in the name of the Mediator, and not to him, yet I am not sure that exact attention to this distinction is absolutely necessary in practice, or that it is always observed by the people of God. There is no doubt that they often address him as their Saviour and Intercessor, and there are passages of Scripture which seem to set them an example. Did not John think of him as Mediator when he uttered this doxology, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever?"* And is he not viewed in the same character by the Church, when it says, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?"† In a word, when we pronounce these words, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all; Amen:"‡ do we not address him as a distinct person from the Father, and a distinct agent in the work of our salvation, and, consequently, as the Mediator, to whom is committed the dispensation of the grace of the new covenant?

It is surprising that there should have been any dispute on this subject, while certain principles are granted by all parties, which are fully sufficient to terminate the controversy. It is acknowledged that we ought to love the Mediator with religious affection, that we should confide in him, and commit our souls to his care, and that we should bow to his authority, and yield implicit obedience to his law. How, then, can there be any hesitation about the propriety of addressing our prayers to him? Are not faith and love the essence of religious worship? and is there any thing more sacred and solemn in prayer, than in the dedication of our souls and bodies to our Redeemer, that they may be pro-

* Rev. i. 5, 6.

† Rev. v. 12.

‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

tected by his power, and saved by his grace? He to whom this homage may be justly paid, is entitled to every other honour; and our ingenuity in making nice distinctions is very unwarrantably employed, if it lead us to defraud him of any of his claims. Certainly we shall not err, if, laying aside unprofitable speculations, we humbly and devoutly obey the command which was long ago given to the Church respecting the Messiah, "He is thy Lord: worship thou him."*

• Psalm xlv. 11.

LECTURE LIV.

ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE PARTICULAR OFFICES OF PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING, INCLUDED IN THAT OF MEDIATOR.—CHRIST'S INVESTITURE WITH THEM.—THEIR RESPECTIVE PROVINCES, AND MUTUAL RELATIONS.—THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.—DIFFERENT PERIODS AND MODES OF ADMINISTERING IT.—VIEW OF CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS AS A PROPHET.

THE general office with which our Redeemer was invested is that of Mediator between God and man. The nature of that office has been explained, and his qualifications for it have been pointed out. There are some particular offices comprehended in it, which I shall consider in their order.

Before we enter upon them, it will be necessary to attend to the manner in which he was invested with them, and fitted for the performance of their respective duties. We have seen that the fundamental qualification for his Mediatorial office, was the assumption of our nature into personal union with the Divine; but this important fact does not include all that the Scriptures say upon the subject. Something farther was done to the assumed nature, to prepare it for the high and arduous part which it was appointed to act.

Our Saviour is called in the Old Testament the Messiah, and in the New Testament the Christ; and both words import that he was the Anointed One. This designation is given to him, in allusion to the rite by which persons were consecrated to their offices under the former dispensation, namely, by being anointed with oil. This rite was observed in the case of the three offices which were most celebrated,

those of prophet, priest, and king. With regard to the prophets, we have, I believe, the solitary instance of Elisha; but it is enough to establish the fact that it was occasionally, if not uniformly, used in setting them apart. The anointing of Aaron and his sons is expressly mentioned in the thirtieth chapter of Exodus; and particular directions are given with regard to the composition of the oil. Of the anointing of kings, we have examples in David and Solomon. In allusion to this rite, our Redeemer is called the Messiah or the Christ, to signify, not that he was consecrated by the same rite, but that he was solemnly appointed to his office by his Father, and furnished with all the requisite qualifications. The Father says concerning him, as is evident from the context, "I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him."* Material oil could confer no power, and impart no qualifications, and was merely a sign, of which the meaning was understood. In the present case, the sign was not used, but the thing signified was communicated in perfection. "He was anointed," says the Scripture, "with the Holy Ghost."†

There are two periods at which this anointing took place. The first was his conception, when he was sanctified by the Holy Ghost, endowed with all the graces which can adorn human nature, and with those faculties which, being afterwards developed, excited admiration even in his youth; for at the age of twelve he astonished the doctors of Jerusalem by his wisdom, both in asking and answering questions. The second was his baptism, when "the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."‡ The Spirit coming down from the opened heavens in a visible form rested upon him, to signify, in conjunction with the voice which proceeded from the excellent glory, to all who were present, that God recognized him as his Son, and bestowed upon him an abundant measure of heavenly influences. In this manner he was publicly installed in his office, and fitted for the discharge of its duties. And thus the prophecy was fulfilled, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of know-

* Psalm lxxxix. 20.

† Acts x. 38.

‡ Matth. iii. 16.

ledge and of the fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears : but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." *

This anointing relates to the human nature of our Saviour. I should have deemed this remark unnecessary, had I not found that even some professed Theologians have entertained confused notions of the subject, and have hesitated to admit the plain proposition which has now been laid down. They seem to have been led into a mistake, by supposing that, because he was anointed as Mediator, the unction extended to both his natures, forgetting that, in consequence of the hypostatical union, what is done to or by either of them, is done to or by his person. We say that the *θεανθρωπος*, the God-man, died for us upon the cross ; but we mean that he died only as a man. In like manner we say, that our Mediator was anointed to his office ; but we mean that he was anointed only in his human nature, unless we refer simply to his appointment to office, &c. And that we ought to mean nothing more, it requires very little reflection to perceive. The anointing is the communication of the Holy Ghost to qualify him for the duties of his office ; but his Divine nature stood in need of no new qualification, and could receive no accession of gifts and graces ; whereas, his human nature possessed no excellence which had not been imparted to it, was capable of progressive improvement, and actually grew in wisdom as well as in stature, and in favour with God and with men.

The particular offices to which our Saviour was anointed, were the three which have been already mentioned as existing among the Jews, and which were conferred by the ceremony of pouring or sprinkling oil upon the persons set apart to them, the prophetical, the sacerdotal, and the regal. The first is ascribed to our Saviour in the following passage, which, the use of it in the New Testament authorises us to apply to

* Is. xi. 2—5.

him, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken;" * the second in these words, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;" † and the third, when God says to him, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." ‡ It is unnecessary to bring any quotations from the Christian Scriptures to prove, that all these offices belong to Jesus Christ. It has been remarked that, under the ancient economy, they were held by separate individuals, or at least that never more than two of them were united in the same person. There were kings and priests as Melchizedek, kings and prophets as David, and perhaps, too, prophets and priests in the case of some of the family of Aaron; but no person occurs who was invested with them all. This honour was reserved to our Redeemer, who alone could realize in himself what was prefigured by the various types. Moses, however, may be considered as an exception, who was at once the prophet of the Lord, the leader of the people, or "king in Jeshurun" || as he is termed, and a priest, or one who at least performed the duties of a priest prior to the inauguration of Aaron. But this, it is said, was an extraordinary case, admitted only for a time, and not intended to be an example. This instance, however, seems to abate the force of the remark, as does likewise that of Samuel, although I do not find that it has been noticed, who was at once the judge of Israel, a prophet, and a priest. As, however, neither he nor Moses was high-priest, and both ministered occasionally only at the altar, it may be true that no person but our Saviour permanently possessed all these offices.

It was necessary that he should be a prophet, a priest, and a king, because the duties of all those offices were requisite to the complete deliverance of his people from the circumstances in which they were placed. The moral condition of mankind shews, that not one of them could have been dispensed with. They were involved in ignorance, guilt, and pollution. Their ignorance is removed by his prophetic office, their guilt by his priestly office, and their pollution by his

* Deut. xviii. 15. † Ps. cx. 4. ‡ Ps. ii. 6. || Deut. xxxiii. 5.

kingly office. As a prophet, he dispels the darkness of ignorance; as a priest, he atones for our sins; as a king, he delivers us from the bondage of depravity. He reveals God to us as a prophet; he brings us near to God as a priest; he renews us after the image of God as a king. As a prophet, he illuminates our minds by the spirit of truth; as a priest, he tranquillizes our hearts and consciences by the spirit of peace; as a king, he sanctifies the whole man by the spirit of holiness. The necessity of all his offices for the complete and final salvation of men, is pointed out in these words of Paul; "Of God he is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."* As these offices relate to both God and man, God being the immediate object of the priestly, and man of the prophetic and kingly office, our Lord realizes the character of a Mediator by performing their duties; for he establishes peace between heaven and earth, and binds them together in intimate and inviolable friendship.

In the relation of his offices to one another, the priestly office must be considered as the foundation of the other two. If Christ had not been a priest, he would not have been a prophet and a king; it being evident that, unless salvation had been obtained for us, it could not be revealed and applied. All his acts towards sinners for their deliverance from sin, and their restoration to the favour of God, pre-suppose an atonement by which Divine justice was satisfied. It was necessary that, as a priest, he should fulfil the condition of the new covenant, before he could administer it as a prophet and a king, for the communication of its blessings. But the order of the execution of his offices towards us is different. In the salvation of the soul, as in the creation of our world, he commences with the diffusion of light. The knowledge of ourselves and of the Saviour, is necessary to the production of faith, by which his righteousness is embraced as the only foundation of our acceptance with God. Conversion consists in "the opening of the blind eyes, and the turning of the soul from darkness to light;" and this is the work of his prophetic office. When our Prophet manifests himself to us by his word and spirit in his mediatorial character, we come to him as our priest, whose sacrifice has expiated our guilt,

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

and submit to him as our king, whose service is perfect liberty, and whose power will defend us from every evil.

I omitted to mention, in the proper place, that the elder Socinians, who believed that Christ was a mere man, and at first was ignorant of the doctrine which he was appointed to publish to the world, maintained that, before he entered upon his ministry, he was taken up into heaven, and there received all necessary instructions. Thus the Racovian Catechism, which is a summary of their creed, in answer to the question, How Jesus Christ came to the knowledge of the Divine will ? says, “ that he ascended into heaven, and there saw his Father, and that life and blessedness which he has announced to us, and heard from his Father all the things which he ought to teach ; and being afterwards let down from heaven to earth, he was anointed with an immense effusion of the Holy Spirit, by whose afflatus he delivered all the things which he had learned from the Father.” The time when this is supposed to have happened, was soon after his baptism, and during his abode in the wilderness. It is enough to have stated this opinion, concerning which the Scripture preserves a profound silence, and which rests solely upon the confident and groundless assertion of those heretics. It was manifestly unnecessary that he should be taken up into heaven, because the will of God could have been as fully revealed to him upon earth. This fancy originated neither in Scripture nor in reason, but was a dishonest expedient, resorted to for the purpose of supporting their favourite dogma concerning the simple humanity of our Saviour, by evading the argument for his pre-existence, founded on those passages of the New Testament which declare that he came down from heaven.

The word prophet is commonly understood to mean a person who foretells future events, and in this sense it frequently occurs. But it also signifies a person who speaks by Divine inspiration, whether the subject relate to the future, the past, or the present ; a person who speaks in an eminent and extraordinary manner ; and even a person who speaks in the name of another like himself. Indeed, the Greek word *προφητης*, and the Hebrew word *נביא*, are used with a considerable variety of meaning. By some of the Jews, the latter term is interpreted *an orator*, or *eloquent preacher* ; and by

others, *a man to whom God has revealed secret things*. In the following words of God to Moses concerning Aaron his brother, it simply denotes one who speaks in the name of another: "Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God." * This passage is to be taken in connexion with what is afterwards said: "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." †

It is not with the usual limitation of the term that we call Jesus Christ a prophet. We use it in its utmost latitude, to denote that he is the great messenger of God, the revealer of his counsels and will, who has not only foretold future events, but made known to us Divine truths to be believed, promises to be embraced, ordinances to be observed, and laws to be obeyed.

When we contemplate Jesus Christ simply as a Divine Person, we must consider him as the uncreated source of all intelligence and wisdom: He is "the true Light, that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world." ‡ In his mediatorial character, however, he speaks not properly in his own name, but in the name of him who gave him his commission, and brings to us his Father's message. Hence we say, that he was invested with the prophetic office; the term, office, implying that he acted a subordinate part, and by the authority of another. What has been now stated is conformable to his own declarations, of which the following are a specimen: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." || In the first verse of the Revelation of John, his intermediate agency in the communication of knowledge to the church is distinctly expressed: "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which

* Exod. iv. 15, 16.

† Ib. vii. 1.

‡ John i. 9.

|| Ib. vii. 16, 17. xii. 49.

must shortly come to pass ; and he sent and signified it by his angel to his servant John." *

Having made these preliminary observations, I proceed to treat directly of his prophetic office. The exercise of it may be considered in three distinct periods. The first reaches from the fall to his incarnation ; the second from that era, or from his baptism, to his death ; and the third from his resurrection, and particularly from the day of Pentecost, to the end of the world.

The first period extends from the fall to his birth ; for, although he was not incarnate, he was the appointed Saviour of his people ; and, as far as was consistent with his present state, he acted the part of a Mediator. The assumption of our nature was not indispensably necessary to prepare him for giving instruction to mankind, although every gracious communication to the world pre-supposed that event as afterwards to take place, and was made in the view of it. There were frequent appearances of a Divine Person in the human form, who delivered commands and promises to the patriarchs ; and it seems reasonable to conclude, that it was the same person who purposed actually to take our nature in a future age. It is highly probable, that it was he who promulgated from Sinai the system of laws which served as the foundation of religion for so many ages ; and, indeed, by whom can we so naturally conceive sacrifices to have been instituted, and the knowledge of future events to have been communicated, as by him in whose person, and manifestation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and subsequent glory, the types and predictions were to be fulfilled ? But there is no necessity to have recourse to conjectures and probabilities, when we are in possession of explicit and authentic information. The following words of Peter deserve particular attention : " Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you ; searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." † The remarkable expression in this passage is, the " Spirit of Christ," or of the Messiah, which evidently signifies, not

* Rev. i. 1.

† 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

merely, as Socinians affirm, that he predicted the Messiah, but that he was sent by him; and, consequently, teaches us that the prophets were his ministers, commissioned and qualified by him to give instructions suited to that age of the church. Hence it appears, that he executed his prophetic office prior to his coming in the flesh, and that the books of the Old Testament contain the revelation of Christ, as well as those of the New. It is not an objection against this statement, that God is said to have spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and in these last days to have spoken to us by his Son; * words which seem to import that, till the last days, the ministry of the Son did not commence; because their design is merely to point out the difference in the external and visible agency under the two dispensations. Under the first, God made known his will by the medium of the prophets; under the second, by the medium of his Son in our nature. But the same person who, in the fulness of time, declared the will of God in person, revealed it before his incarnation by human messengers, as he continued to do after his ascension. The difference between the former and the present dispensation consisted chiefly in this, that the present commenced with the personal ministry of the Messiah, and hence the Gospel is called, the word “which began to be spoken by the Lord.” †

The second period extends from the birth of Christ, or more properly from his baptism, when he entered upon his public ministry to his death. During this period, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, declared him to men with his own lips. The privilege which his contemporaries enjoyed, who heard his discourses so full of wisdom and grace, was invaluable, although few of them understood and improved it. “Blessed,” he said to his disciples, “are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” ‡ Were I to attempt to give an account of the instructions which he delivered to his disciples and others, it would be necessary to transcribe, or at least to lay before you

* Heb. i. 1, 2.

† Ib. ii. 3.

‡ Matth. xiii. 16, 17.

a summary of the Gospels. In general, it may be observed that, while he corrected the false notions of religion, and the perverse interpretations of the law of Moses, which prevailed among the Jews, he unfolded the character of God in all its perfection, called the attention of men to the cultivation of piety and holiness as alone acceptable to him, exhibited himself as the Messiah whom they expected, and gave intimations of the design of his mission, and the nature of the salvation which he had come to accomplish. At present I shall not speak more particularly of his doctrine, because it will come under review in the sequel of this lecture.

There is a question, however, which this is the proper place to consider, Whether Christ corrected and perfected the moral law, which was delivered to the Jews? It has been maintained, that the moral precepts of Christ were in some instances different from those of Moses, and that our Saviour has enlarged the law by prescribing new duties, and has even prohibited certain actions which were formerly permitted. It is a favourite tenet of Socinians, that the moral system delivered to the church before the coming of Christ, was imperfect, and needed correction or supplement, and they have been led to adopt it by their peculiar views with respect to the design of the mission of Christ. As they do not admit, with the catholic church, that he came into the world to expiate our sins, it was necessary to find something for him to do, which should be worthy of the great expectations that were excited, and the mighty preparations that were introductory to his appearance. With this view they are anxious to prove, that the rule of morality which had been previously given to the Jews, laboured under many defects, that he might have the glory of having published to mankind a law clear and full, in which our whole duty to God and to man is explained. In the Racovian Catechism, which first appeared about the beginning of the seventeenth century, we find this question, "What are the perfect commandments of God, comprehended in the New Testament?" to which this answer is returned, "A part of them is contained in the precepts delivered by Moses, together with those which were added by Christ and his Apostles; and a part is contained in those which were peculiarly prescribed by the same Christ and his

Apostles." * By the latter, I apprehend they mean precepts entirely new, and by the former old precepts improved. They go on to shew, under the several precepts of the decalogue, the supposed additions and improvements, in a manner by no means satisfactory, and sometimes exceedingly trifling and silly. On the contrary, those whom we call orthodox, affirm that the law was absolutely perfect from the beginning; that Christ came not to destroy it, or any part of it, but to fulfil it; and that all the duties enjoined by him, which have been supposed to be new, may be resolved into love to God, or love to man. The right answer to this question depends upon the manner in which it is stated. In the Socinian sense, I have no hesitation in saying, that it leads to a conclusion which ought not to be admitted. If it were asked, Whether Jesus Christ enjoined greater love to God and our neighbour than was enjoined by the law of Moses? no man who had considered the subject, could hesitate to give a negative answer. But if it were asked, Whether he has prescribed new modes of expressing our love to both? I cannot conceive that there could be any heresy in saying, that he may have done so. Divines have endeavoured to prove, that faith in Christ, and repentance, are duties inculcated by the law which was given to Adam in innocence. This position requires explanation. Faith and repentance could not be duties incumbent upon man, while he retained his integrity, and consequently they can be referred to the moral law as originally given, only in the same sense in which all possible duties of all possible intelligent creatures might be referred to it, because it enjoins supreme love to God, from which universal obedience will flow. In strict language, they are new modifications of this principle, or new duties founded on new relations between man and his Creator. At the same time it should be observed that, whether we call them new or old, they were not prescribed for the first time by our Saviour, but were enjoined under the former dispensation. The arguments commonly advanced to prove that the moral law was corrected and improved by our Saviour, are of little or no force; either because the new duties which he is supposed to have enjoined, were binding before his coming, or because his design has been totally misapprehended,

* Catech. Eccl. Pol. Sect. vi. Cap. 1.

as if he were correcting the law itself, when he was only exposing and rejecting the corrupt glosses and traditionary maxims of the Rabbies.

The third period extends from the ascension of Christ, or rather from the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost on his disciples, to the end of the world. But this period may be subdivided into two portions, according to the difference in the mode of administration. In the first he instructed the church by extraordinary means. The Apostles were inspired men, and delivered to the world the revelations which were made to them by the Spirit. And as it was the Spirit of Christ who filled them with knowledge and wisdom, our Saviour continued to execute his prophetic office by their ministry, as much as when he declared the mysteries of the kingdom to his immediate followers with his own lips. This is also evident from his words to them on the evening before his death: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shew it unto you." * There is no difference in respect of authority between the doctrines of his Apostles, and those delivered by himself. They are equally his doctrines, and are entitled to be received with the same submission of mind, and the same undoubting confidence. Hence we perceive how groundless is the distinction which has been made between the gospels and the epistles, as if the former were a more certain rule of faith than the latter. As those who chiefly insist on this distinction, affirm that our Saviour was a mere man, peccable and fallible, there is no proper foundation for it in their system, because such a person could not be so much superior to the Apostles, as to entitle his testimony to a decided preference to theirs, especially as theirs was confirmed by miracles as great and numerous as those which he performed. We have always reason to suspect those who depreciate one part of Scripture to enhance

* John xvi. 12—15.

the value of another. This expedient has not been resorted to from a conviction of its truth, but to serve a particular purpose. Certain doctrines which its authors are unwilling to receive, are more fully and explicitly taught in the Epistles ; and the insinuations thrown out respecting their obscurity, the perplexedness of the reasoning, the abruptness of the style, and the inferiority of the writers, are designed to set aside their evidence in favour of those doctrines ; as in a legal process, the imputations on the character of a witness, are intended to weaken the force of his testimony. The shift is as unavailing as it is dishonest, for it were easy to shew that the contested doctrines, as the divinity and atonement of Christ, election and justification by grace, are plainly delivered in the Gospels ; and that the only respect in which the Epistles differ from them is, that there they receive a more ample illustration, and the objections against them are considered and refuted. The Epistles are the word of Christ, as much as the Gospels, for the writers were assisted by his Spirit in composing them. When conjoined with the Gospels, they fill up or complete what we call the Christian revelation, because it was communicated to the world by Christ himself, and his accredited messengers.

The second portion into which we have divided the last period of the ministry of Christ as a prophet, reaches from the close of revelation to the end of time. During this interval, he executes his office by ordinary means, that is, by the Scriptures, which it is his will that men should read and understand ; by his ministers, who are appointed to explain and apply them ; and by his Spirit, of whose agency, in the illumination of the mind, we shall afterwards speak. Jesus Christ, in his state of exaltation, continues to be the instructor of the ignorant, and of them that are out of the way ; and his work will not cease, till all who are to be saved have been brought to the acknowledgment of the truth. Hence, he is represented as still speaking to us by his word, written and preached : “ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh ; for, if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.”* The system of ordinances, and ministers, and laws, instituted for the conversion and salva-

* Heb. xii. 25.

tion of men, has emanated from his authority, and will be maintained by his providence, till its design is accomplished, in the perfection of every member of the Church. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* Whatever knowledge of God and his will, of the purposes of grace, and the realities of the world to come, is found among men, it has been derived from the instructions of Christ; and his word will continue to impart wisdom to his disciples, till they have entered into the world above, where their faculties will be fully expanded, and vision will succeed to faith. He is the sun of the spiritual world, whose rays, penetrating into our benighted souls, diffuse a divine light, and make them shine with reflected glory. In short, as there is but one sun in the heavens, from which light has flowed to irradiate every region of the earth, throughout the successive generations of mankind; so, our Redeemer is the one source of all the spiritual wisdom, which has enlightened them from the beginning of the world, in whatever form it has been communicated; whether as a record of the past, or a prediction of the future, a disclosure of mysteries which reason could not discover, or an authoritative publication of the will of the Supreme. And hence originates the unity of revelation, the harmony which binds together the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, the identity, in respect of substance, of the religions of the antediluvians and the men of the present age; for, great as the difference seems to be upon a superficial view, it is reduced to this single point, that the germ contained in the first notices of it has now developed itself, and yields fruit in abundance.

* Eph. iv. 11—15.

If you now ask, what Jesus Christ, as a prophet, has taught us? I might, in answer to the question, refer you to the Scriptures. These contain his instructions under both dispensations, and are the only rule of faith and obedience. I shall not attempt to give you a summary of his doctrine, which would occupy too much time; and, besides, would be improper, as it would necessarily lead to a repetition of topics, which have been already considered, and an anticipation of others, which will be afterwards discussed. I shall confine myself to a few general remarks.

First, He has illustrated certain truths of which men already possessed some knowledge, such as the existence of God, his providence and moral government, and the law which he has given for the regulation of our conduct. Of these, some notions were found among nations which had not been favoured with revelation, but they were imperfect, and mingled with errors, as we have seen in a former part of this course. It was in consequence of his teaching by the Prophets, that the Jews were so distinguished by their creed, that, in matters of religion, the wisest nations of antiquity, when compared with them, were as children and fools. No philosopher could ever venture to pronounce, with unhesitating confidence, the proposition which was in the mouth of every rustic in Canaan, that God is one. It is owing to his teaching by the Apostles, that the polytheism, the idolatry, the gross superstition, the licentious maxims and barbarous usages of Greece and Rome, and other nations less civilized, have been supplanted by the pure and simple creed, which is adopted in Christian countries, or, at least, in such of them as acknowledge the Scripture alone as their standard. Those truths, which were once dimly seen, now shine with the light of day. The knowledge of them is facilitated, and is within the reach of the most common capacity, because they are not to be sought out by laborious investigation, but to be received upon authority. The voice of Jesus Christ has decided all controversies, and terminated all doubts respecting them. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."*

Secondly, He has established as certain some points which

* John i. 18.

were the subject of conjecture, or of fluctuating opinion. I refer particularly to the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments. On these topics much was talked and written, and, perhaps, they were not called in question by the common people, who did not reason about them, but gave credit to tradition. That the belief of the wisest among the Heathens rested upon no solid foundation, is evident from this fact, that when they proceed to bring arguments, some of them are inconclusive and fanciful, and those which are of more weight, failed to produce conviction, as we see from the doubts expressed by the most eminent philosophers. If at one time they seem to have attained to certainty, at another they hesitated and wavered, and ended in leaving the matter to be determined by the event. "But Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." Coming from the invisible state, he has so far disclosed its secrets, as to assure us that the soul shall survive the death of the body, and will be consigned to bliss or woe by the sentence of its Judge. Although this truth may have little practical effect upon many of his followers, they never call it in question; and they alone doubt and disbelieve, who, having renounced him as their Teacher, commit themselves to the guidance of their erring reason, and the blinding influence of unholy passions. In the creed of his followers, it is a primary article, that the present is only the introductory stage of our existence; that at death we shall enter upon a new state of being; and that, through him, they who believe, shall enjoy perpetual felicity in heaven.

Thirdly, He has made known truths of which men were completely ignorant. I refer to the scheme of redemption in all its parts, which, having its origin in the sovereign will of God, is a matter of pure revelation. Some notions were entertained by heathen nations of the placability of the Divine nature, and sacrifices were offered to appease the anger of the gods, and to conciliate their favour. But they could assign no satisfactory reason for their opinion or their practice. Their fathers had believed and acted in this manner before them, and they followed them without being able to shew that their hope had any solid foundation. The truth is, that it was not from reason that they derived their ideas of the

mercy of the Supreme Being and the efficacy of sacrifices, but from revelation, of which some fragments, encrusted with superstition, had been handed down to them by tradition. Those faint rays, which glimmered amidst the darkness of heathenism, proceeded from the Sun of righteousness, but had been deprived of their splendour and their influence, by the grossness of the medium through which they were transmitted. All our knowledge of the gracious purposes of God, whether more or less extensive, whether consisting in hopes and conjectures or in the full assurance of faith, must be traced to this source: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?"* None was present with him but his Son, when the plan was formed for the salvation of our guilty race. There is nothing in his external works to suggest the idea of it; there is no impression of heavenly mysteries upon visible objects. Providence displays his beneficence and his patience; but it gives no intimation of his purpose to bestow final felicity upon sinners, of an atonement to expiate their guilt, or of the communication of supernatural grace to purify their nature. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."† It is the glory of Jesus Christ as a prophet, that he has not only shed new light upon subjects of which men possessed some previous knowledge, but has disclosed a scene in grandeur and interest surpassing the wonders of creation. It is chiefly on this account that there was a necessity for his prophetic office. It is chiefly on this account that he is the Light of the world. And, indeed, all the other knowledge which he has communicated to mankind would have been of no avail, if he had not revealed his Father to us as the God of love, and himself in the character of a Saviour. What we wanted to know, was not merely that there is one God, but that he is propitious to his fallen creatures; not merely that we should worship him, but that our services shall be acceptable to him; not merely that there is a state beyond the grave, but by what means we shall obtain possession of its blessedness. On these important

* Rom. xi. 34.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

subjects, he has given us full satisfaction. How welcome to us should be a Teacher, who speaks the words of truth and grace, and in the execution of his office, has realized the following interesting description: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." * This is the jubilee of the human race, and the Messiah, in the character of our prophet, has announced it by the Gospel.

I shall resume the subject in the next Lecture.

* Is. lxi. 1—3.

LECTURE LV.

ON THE PROPHETICAL OFFICE OF CHRIST.

VIEW OF CHRIST'S INSTRUCTIONS AS A PROPHET CONTINUED.—SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST TO ALL OTHER TEACHERS, IN THE COMPLETENESS, PERSPICUITY, AUTHORITY, AND EFFICACY OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS.—AGENCY OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE EXECUTION OF CHRIST'S PROPHETICAL OFFICE ; ITS NECESSITY AND EFFECTS.

IN the preceding Lecture, I pointed out the qualifications of Jesus Christ for the prophetical office, the time during which it is executed, and the subjects of his instructions, of which only a very general account was attempted. You would observe, that the subjects to which I referred were all of a religious nature, and to these his instructions were confined.

Jesus Christ has said nothing concerning some topics to which the attention of men is earnestly directed, and which are intimately connected with their temporal interests ; as science, politics, and the various arts by which life is sustained and adorned. Of these he took no notice ; not because they are unimportant, for, in their own sphere, they are of great utility, but because they bore no relation to the purpose of his mission. In the business of the present life, reason and experience are sufficient guides. We needed no revelation to assist us in the study of nature, in the operations of husbandry and commerce, in the constitution of civil government, and the enactment of laws for the security of our persons and property. The degree of knowledge which is necessary for purposes of practical use, may be obtained on these subjects

by the exercise of the faculties with which our Creator has endowed us. There was no reason, therefore, why Jesus should have interrupted his more important labours to descend to details about these inferior matters. He was something higher than a philosopher or statesman ; he was a teacher of sublime mysteries, which it had not entered into the mind of man to conceive.

He has not given us so full and particular an account of a future state as some men may deem desirable, and they may, therefore, look upon the want of it as a defect. Curiosity is a very powerful principle, and every thing which promises to gratify it meets with eager attention. How welcome to some persons would be graphical descriptions of heaven, and such a detail of the state of its inhabitants and their employments, as we receive of the places which they have visited from travellers on their return from a foreign country ! Enthusiasts indulge in such descriptions. Mistaking the visions of fancy for realities, they retail them as authentic, and sometimes obtain for their fables the credit which is due only to truth. You might imagine that one of them had been in the celestial paradise, and had lately descended to the earth with the impressions of its scenes of magnificence and felicity fresh in his memory ; while, in fact, he is the dupe of his own sleeping or waking dreams. Mahomet has portrayed his paradise with the bright colours of oriental imagery ; and while it rises to the view of his deluded followers, with its groves of perpetual verdure, and its cooling streams, and its Houris, and all its other sensual delights, they feel their hearts glow with augmented zeal for his religion, and new fervour of desire. Our Prophet, who alone could have given a faithful description of the invisible state, has abstained from it. He has contented himself with informing us, that there is a place of rest for his followers beyond the limits of this visible diurnal sphere, and with a general account of the exercises and enjoyments of those who are admitted into it. There is nothing to please the imagination ; but there is enough to support faith, and animate hope, and minister consolation amidst the ills of life ; and if these purposes are accomplished, his end is gained. If men will not be excited to a life of piety and holiness, by the simple knowledge that there is another world in which the

followers of Christ shall receive a recompence of incalculable value and everlasting duration, they would have continued equally insensible, and as much attached to earthly vanities, although, by the particularity of the description, the veil had been drawn aside, and it had stood disclosed, as it were, to the eye.

Having taken a general view of the instructions of Christ, I proceed to lay before you some characters or properties by which they are distinguished, and he is proved to be superior to all other teachers.

The first particular to which I request your attention, is their fulness or completeness; for, although there are some points, as we have shewn, which he has passed over in silence, there is nothing wanting in his instructions as a system of religious truth. To be convinced of this fact, we must take into consideration the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as constituting a whole; for such they are, having been dictated by one Spirit, and intended to promote one design. When we call them two revelations, we express ourselves inaccurately if we mean, that they are different in the subject of which they treat; for it is one religion, varying only in its external form, which is taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Were we to separate the Old and the New Testament, and to examine them as distinct and independent revelations, we might find defects in the former; but what is wanting in the one is supplied in the other, and both taken together constitute the word of Christ. In like manner, if we were to consider by itself the revelation made by our Saviour in person, it also might appear to us deficient, for he had many things to say to his disciples which they were not then able to bear, of which, however, they were afterwards informed when the Spirit came and led them into all the truth. I have no doubt that the New Testament alone is sufficient for salvation, as it contains the whole gospel, or all that can be known concerning the gracious purposes of God; but when I speak of the fulness of our Saviour's instructions, I refer also to the Old Testament, of which the histories and prophecies and devotional compositions are so useful and edifying to the Church. What I affirm is, that he has made a perfect revelation of the will of God, using

the term *perfect* in a relative sense, as importing that it is fully adapted to its design. As much light is let in upon the mind as is suited to its present capacity and circumstances. We may learn from the Scriptures all the truths which we ought to know, and all the duties which we are bound to perform; we may find the way to heaven, and receive all the directions and assistance which we need in pursuing our journey to it. While vain curiosity is checked, humble inquiries are encouraged, and the means of satisfying them are provided. Whosoever sits down at the feet of Christ and receives his law, shall be made wise unto salvation.

“ I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things.”* These words have no authority in themselves, as they were spoken by an ignorant, heretical woman; but they prove the state of opinion among the Samaritans, and no doubt, also of the Jews. There was a general expectation that the Messiah would solve all questions in religion, and make a clearer and more perfect revelation than was then enjoyed. When Moses, by the order of God, had given laws and ordinances to his countrymen to regulate their worship and obedience, he added, “ The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.”† Whether we conceive Jesus Christ alone to be meant, or the words to have a double sense, and to refer, in the first instance to a succession of prophets, and ultimately to him, they manifestly implied, that new communications of the Divine Will would be made. When the ministry of the prophets came to a close, the Jews received a commandment to adhere steadfastly to the law which was published from Sinai, but at the same time were directed to look for a dispensation of greater light. Hence the last of them closes his book with a prediction of the appearance of the Sun of righteousness, and of his forerunner who would prepare the people for the day of the Lord. When the Baptist came, and the eyes of all men were turned to him, he told them of another whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose, and who would excel him in doctrine, as well as in dignity of person. “ He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly; and

* John iv. 25.

† Deut. xviii. 15.

speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth." * But there is no intimation of another divine messenger after Jesus Christ, to supply what may be wanting, or to illuminate what may be dark in his revelation. By the books of the New Testament, the canon is completed. God, when he spoke to us by his Son, spoke for the last time. The Spirit of inspiration is withdrawn from the church, and men must henceforth walk by the rule of the written word. This is a proof of the fulness of revelation. It is not because God is less attentive than in former times to the interests of mankind, that he no longer sends extraordinary messengers, but because the revelation, which he has already given, is sufficient. The Scriptures are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and are able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us unto all good works." †

It is on the ground of the fulness or perfection of the instructions of Jesus Christ as a Prophet, that we are commanded to hear him alone, and to call no man master or teacher. If there were any defect in revelation, it would not be a crime to endeavour to supply it by the efforts of our own reason, or by having recourse to the superior wisdom of others. The undue stress which is sometimes laid upon human authority in religion, betrays the want of proper respect for the claims of our Saviour to the implicit and unreserved confidence of his professed disciples. The Church of Rome, by admitting traditions as a part of the rule of faith, and placing them on a level with the dictates of inspiration, pronounces the Scriptures to be imperfect ; and is as manifestly guilty of setting aside the prophetic office of Christ, as she is of setting aside his priestly office, while she exalts the glorified saints to the rank of intercessors with God.

The second particular which is worthy of attention, is the perspicuity of his instructions. In ascribing this property to them, I wish it to be understood that I do not apply it to every part of them, but to the Scriptures considered as a whole. The revelation of Jesus Christ, taken as a whole, is perspicuous ; that is, it communicates distinct and satisfac-

* John iii. 31, 32.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

tory information respecting all the subjects which it interests us to know. Some parts of it, when viewed by themselves, are obscure. This is the general character of the Old Testament, so far as it speaks of future things, whether they relate to Christ himself and his work, or to the events which were to befall his Church to the end of the world. This obscurity may be said to have been intentional, it being the design of God not to give more light than was adapted to the circumstances of mankind. You will perceive that his wisdom required, that a clear and minute statement of future things should not be given, for various reasons, and particularly that there might be no interference with the free agency of men, who were to be instruments, and in many cases, the unconscious instruments, of fulfilling his will. But these obscurities, and particularly those which relate to the Messiah, are cleared up in other parts of revelation; for what was formerly the subject of prediction, is now the subject of history. The incongruities which seemed to be in his character, while at one time he was described as a man of sorrows, and at another as a mighty conqueror, at one time as dying, and at another as enjoying immortal life, are explained in the Gospels, and are seen to harmonize in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me."* There are obscurities, too, which arise from the nature of the subject. We cannot understand the doctrine of the Trinity, of the union of two natures in Christ, and of the operations of the Holy Ghost upon the soul; we cannot give an answer to several questions which are proposed with respect to the Divine decrees, the agency of Providence, and the origin of evil. But before we make our ignorance an objection against the perfection of revelation, we should be certain that it proceeds from the suppression of information which might have been communicated, and not from our want of capacity. Of this, however, we are not certain; or rather, we have reason to believe that some of those subjects are beyond the comprehension of any created intellect, and that none of them

* Luke xxiv. 44.

could have been rendered intelligible to us in the present state of our faculties. The obscurity, therefore, which attends them, is no reproach to our Teacher, who has adapted his lessons to the ability of his scholars. He could have given a full explanation of them, for to him they are not mysteries ; but to whom should he have addressed it ? Not surely to us, in whose minds his words would have excited no ideas, and who should have been in the same situation with the prophet Daniel, who said, when in answer to his question the man clothed in linen declared the time of the end of the wonders, “ I heard, but I understood not.”

It is worthy of attention that, although in such cases the interior of the doctrines is enveloped in darkness which no eye can penetrate, the doctrines themselves are clearly revealed. No person who reads the Scriptures with attention and candour can doubt, that there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead ; that our nature and the Divine are united in our Saviour ; that God has fore-ordained all things which come to pass ; and that men and all their actions are subject to the control of his providence. It is not necessary that we should be able to shew how these things are, nor is it possible to conceive any moral purpose which such knowledge would promote ; religion is concerned only with the facts ; and these are stated in such a manner, that ingenuity is required, not to find, but to avoid finding them in the Scriptures. If it be true that the facts alone are of practical utility, and that a more intimate acquaintance with them would contribute nothing to their effect, our Lord has been sufficiently explicit, and, with respect even to these points, has fulfilled his duty as a Prophet.

With regard to revelation, considered as a whole, and as intended to instruct us in religion, no man can reasonably complain of want of perspicuity. What is more plain, than that there is one God, possessed of every natural and moral perfection ?—that he is the Creator, and Governor, and Judge of the human race ?—that we are sinners, and his Son is our Saviour ?—that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and now intercedes for us in heaven ?—that we are justified through faith in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit ?—that we are bound to yield obedience to his law ?—that he will raise the

dead, pronounce sentence upon the righteous and the wicked, and receive his faithful followers into his everlasting kingdom? These and similar topics, which constitute the essence of religion, are expressed in the plainest manner, and are level to the lowest capacity. The unlearned may understand them, and even children may attain such a measure of knowledge as shall awaken the feelings and exercises of piety. No man can be a scholar or a philosopher, without superior talents, and many years spent in reading, and observation, and reflection; but to a disciple of Christ, nothing more is required than attention, humility, and prayer.

A third character of the instructions of Christ, is the authority with which they are delivered. The manner is not that of an ordinary teacher, who feels it incumbent upon him to prove what he says, but of a legislator, who commands. The first chapter of the Bible (for you will remember that the whole Scripture is the revelation of Christ, as I shewed in my last lecture) furnishes a specimen. An event is there recorded, of which there could be no human witness, and about which, therefore, the ingenuity of men has displayed itself in the invention of a variety of theories. The history of the creation is not submitted by Moses to the judgment of the learned, but propounded as unquestionably true; not a single argument is advanced in support of the narrative; coming from the Creator himself, who revealed it to his servant, it demands the assent of all to whom it is published. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The same authoritative manner is apparent throughout the whole Scripture. It is seen in the ministry of the succeeding prophets. No hesitation is expressed, whether they foretell future events, or tender reproofs, or denounce threatenings, or inculcate duties. Their personal authority, indeed, was nothing, but they speak in the name of God; bearing his commission, they demand implicit obedience; and, if they ever condescend to reason, it is solely with a view to give greater force to their admonitions and intreaties. The Scriptures every where suggest the idea of a law, accompanied with many manifestations of grace, but speaking in the tone of command, and requiring submission as our duty.

The authoritative manner, however, is more fully displayed

in the personal instructions of our Lord. There was necessarily some abatement in those of the prophets, who, being only his messengers, were under the necessity of appealing to their commission; but, in him, authority assumed its most dignified character. While they spake in the name of God, he spake in his own name. It is true, that he also was the Messenger of the Lord of hosts, but he was of a different rank from all who had preceded him. He was the Son, as well as the servant of JEHOVAH, and, therefore, entitled to address mankind in a style which would have been unbecoming and presumptuous in a mere mortal; and, accordingly, if on some occasions he referred to his commission as attested by miracles, on others he spake as the oracle of truth. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," was the only argument which he usually assigned for his doctrines, the only reason which he alleged for demanding the assent and obedience of his hearers. "The people," we are told, "were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes."* This remark is made at the close of his sermon on the mount, throughout which he had spoken in a strain which might well astonish the hearers, because it was different from any thing to which they had been accustomed. The Scribes were regarded as persons of superior wisdom, and the people listened with reverence to these expounders of the law. He treated them as his inferiors, and, without hesitation or ceremony, set aside their maxims as false and licentious. To their instructions, supported as they were by the traditions of the elders, which they pretended to be of equal weight with the written word; to their instructions, which no man had hitherto ventured to dispute, he opposed his simple affirmation: "It hath been said," or, "ye have heard that it was said to them of old," but 'I tell you the contrary.'

It is in consequence of the authority with which the instructions of Christ are delivered, that faith is prescribed as a duty. They are not exhibited as matters of speculation, to which we may assent or not, as we feel ourselves disposed. We are bound to believe them and to act upon them, from respect for him, as well as from a regard to our own interest. The gospel is called a law, because it is the will of a supe-

* Matt. vii. 28, 29.

rior, and faith is called the obedience of faith. Unbelievers are guilty, not only of rejecting his proffered grace, but also of despising his authority. Hence, the commission which he gives to his Apostles, and which authorises the ministry of the word to the end of the world, was enforced by this awful sanction: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."*

The last particular which I shall mention, is the efficacy of his instructions. A power accompanies them, which was never exerted by human eloquence. "Is not my word as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"† We have a remarkable instance, in the effect produced upon the servants of the Jewish Sanhedrim, who were sent to apprehend our Saviour. They had, no doubt, imbibed the prejudices of their employers against him, and, at any rate, would have executed their commission, in order to please them. When they came to the place, Jesus was addressing the people. But their attention was arrested by the sound of his voice; as they listened, their admiration was excited, and, forgetting the purpose for which they had come, they returned exclaiming, to the no small mortification of the rulers, "Never man spake like this man!"‡ The efficacy of his instructions appears in the success which attended the preaching of his gospel in the primitive ages. Notwithstanding the obstacles which were opposed to it, it spread with such rapidity during the lives of the Apostles, that it reached almost every part of the Roman empire, and even some nations lying beyond its frontiers; and, after their decease, it continued to make progress, although its path was marked with blood, till the whole civilized world submitted to its sway. The historian Gibbon has assigned five secondary causes, as he calls them, of its success, meaning, however, that they are the primary or only causes. His causes are obviously inadequate to the production of the effect, and every Christian must view, with triumph, this abortive attempt to rob his religion of the honour of having established its dominion solely by the power of the truth. Its success is a fulfilment of the prophecy: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine

* Mark xvi. 16.

† Jer. xxiii. 29.

‡ John vii. 46.

enemies. 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.'*

Human eloquence, by moving the passions, may lead men to adopt new resolutions, and rouse them to sudden efforts of vigour; it may produce permanent effects in politics, in religious profession, and in moral conduct, although, in the latter case, it must be acknowledged, that it has few triumphs to boast. The history of ancient times furnishes only one or two instances, which, if examined by a proper standard, would be found to be of no value. Shall these be brought into comparison with the innumerable trophies which the eloquence of our Divine Teacher has won?—with the thousands who, in obedience to his command, have renounced their prejudices, their pleasures, their gains, and their honours, and have submitted to a life of self-denial and suffering? Let us remember, that the word of Christ has prevailed to induce men, not only to embrace a new system of opinions, but to adopt a new manner of living; that it has purified them from their sins, and from sins which once seemed to be essential to their happiness; that it has effected such a revolution in their hearts, that the objects of their love and hatred are exchanged, and new tastes, and tempers, and feelings are displayed, as if they had been created again. As, in the days of his flesh, when he said to any man, "Follow thou me," he forsook all and became his disciple, so it is now; the proudest humbly bow to his command; the most abject slave of the world, bursting his fetters, enters into his service; even the dead hear him, and live; for the following words are verified in every age of the Church: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For, as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself."†

The efficacy of the instructions of Christ is connected with the operations of grace; and this naturally leads me to remark, that as he teaches men by his word, so he also executes his prophetic office by the agency of the Holy Ghost on their minds. "He reveals to us," our Church says, "by his word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation."‡ Of this double teaching there is an illustrious promise in the Old Testament:

* Ps. cx. 2, 3.

† John v. 25, 26.

‡ Shorter Cat. Q. 24.

“As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord : My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.”* The promise of the Spirit which our Lord made to his disciples, relates primarily to them, but authorises the expectation of his presence and gracious operation in every age of the church. Hence he is called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;† and the example of Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, encourages others to pray for his enlightening influences.

But if the Scriptures are a perfect rule of faith and manners, and are expressed with such perspicuity on all subjects essential to salvation, that even the illiterate may understand them, of what use is the Spirit?

In the first place, I remark, that it is not the office of the Spirit to give new revelations. Some, from mere ignorance conceiving that this is understood to be his office, and judging rightly that he is not wanted for any such purpose, have rejected the common doctrine of his operation in the soul. They may have been encouraged in their error by enthusiasts, who, boasting of the Spirit, have pretended to be favoured with supernatural discoveries, and have retailed their extravagant fancies as heavenly visions. But we expressly disclaim this view of the subject, and maintain that he is not sent to teach any thing new, but to enable us to understand in a spiritual manner the truths which are already revealed. In fact, we could hold no other opinion consistently with the principle which we avow, that the canon of Scripture is completed, and that all things are taught in it which are necessary to salvation. Whether God may not, for some important purpose, make known to individuals by his Spirit things secret and future, is a question which we presume not to decide; but such revelations are appropriated to the use of those individuals, and have no claim to the attention of others, unless they were authenticated by miracles, and wanting this attestation, are no more a part of the rule of faith and obedience than any mere human speculation.

* Is. lix. 21.

† Eph. i. 17.

In the second place, It is not the office of the Spirit, to discover to us mysteries and recondite meanings of Scripture, which would have eluded the research of our unassisted faculties. I acknowledge that a man who has received the Holy Ghost, will understand many parts of the Scriptures better than those who have not received him ; that he will perceive a beauty, and glory, and goodness in subjects which others regard with the greatest indifference ; but I affirm at the same time, that there is no doctrine of religion, of which an unregenerated man may not acquire a speculative notion, by the exercise of his natural understanding. The practice of allegorizing the Scriptures, and affixing senses to them which do not present themselves to ordinary readers, has resulted rather from an affectation of ingenuity, than from any pretension to supernatural illumination. But some persons, mistaking the wild reveries of imagination for the motions of the Divine Spirit, have pretended to sublime discoveries, and brought to light concealed wonders ; so that, if any credit were due to them, we should conclude, that truth indeed lies at the bottom of a well, dark and deep, where it must have for ever remained, if they had not been furnished with extraordinary means for drawing it up. There are mysteries in the Scriptures, which no man can explain ; there are passages which it requires acuteness of intellect to explore ; but in general they are expressed in simple terms, which are to be understood in their usual sense ; and the only requisites for the successful study of them are attention and a moderate capacity.

The Holy Ghost teaches, by enabling the mind to perceive the truth, and excellence, and interesting nature of the doctrines of revelation. That his agency is needed for this purpose, none will deny but those who choose to give the lie direct to the Scriptures, and entertain an extravagant idea of the power of reason, which is at variance with the experience of all ages ; for, whatever perspicacity reason has discovered in matters of science, it has shewn itself to be blind as a mole in religion. “ The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” * There has been much disputing about the true sense of “ the

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

natural man,"—*ψυχικος ανθρωπος*;—and an evident wish has been sometimes discovered to give such an explanation as should not represent the mind as wholly incapable, without Divine assistance, of forming just views of supernatural truths. The man, of whom the Apostle speaks, has been called the sensual man, the animal man, the man who makes his senses, and passions, and prejudices, the standard of judgment; and the character has been supposed to be realized in the heathen philosophers, who rejected the Gospel because it did not accord with their speculations. Whatever English term we may use in translating *ψυχικος*, the meaning is obvious to every person who is willing to see it. The natural is opposed to the spiritual man in the next verse; *ψυχικος το πνευματικος*. The same contrast is stated in the Epistle of Jude, who says of some, that they are *ψυχικοι*, "having not the Spirit."* The natural man and the spiritual man are opposed to each other. They belong to different classes, and are distinguished by different qualities. The former has only the powers of nature, improved, it may be, by culture; the latter has received a supernatural gift. If you inquire, then, why the natural man cannot discover the things of the Spirit, or the truths of religion? the reason is, that he has not received the Spirit; whence it follows, that the agency of the Holy Ghost is necessary to the illumination of the mind; and this the Apostle plainly signifies when he adds, that the things of the Spirit are spiritually discerned, or can be rightly perceived only by a spiritual man. This single passage is sufficient to prove the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures, indeed, are said to be able to make us wise unto salvation; but their sufficiency consists solely in a complete exhibition of truth. Notwithstanding their fulness and clearness, they will make no man savingly wise, unless his understanding be opened to understand them, by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.

The manner in which the Spirit acts upon the mind when he illuminates it, is unknown, as is the manner in which our Maker acts upon us, when he assists us in the natural exercise of our mental powers. The one is a mystery of grace, and the other a mystery of nature: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and

* Jude 19.

thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." *

It is impossible to describe, except in general terms, the knowledge which believers acquire by the teaching of the Spirit, or to shew, so as to make the distinction perfectly intelligible, the difference between this knowledge and that which is obtained by the unassisted exercise of our rational faculties. "No words," as I have elsewhere observed, "however carefully and copiously selected, could make a man, who had been born blind, form an idea of light. The views of Divine things, which are obtained by the internal revelation, are clear and impressive. Hence, believers are said to "discern" spiritual things, to "behold with open or unveiled face the glory of the Lord, and to be changed into his image." Such evidence accompanies the truth, and such a manifestation is made of its excellence, that the mind feels the highest assurance, and embraces it with ardour and ineffable delight. The Christian enters upon a new scene, and sees around him objects, the grandest and most interesting, which awaken a train of feelings and affections never experienced before. The words of Scripture are the same which he had often read without any emotion, but the thoughts which they excite are exceedingly different. There is a living virtue in the language of inspiration which penetrates into the inmost recesses of his soul, exerts a commanding, transforming influence upon it, and fills it with light, and love, and hope, and activity. A similar change would take place if a man of a gross uncultivated mind were suddenly inspired with those refined perceptions, and that delicate sensibility, which are the foundation of taste. A new light would be poured upon the face of nature. The scenery at which he lately looked with a languid and careless eye, would present features of sublimity and beauty, by which his soul would be alternately filled with awe and delight. Where nothing formerly appeared but a variety of objects, distinguished only by their place and their form, he would now discover order, proportion, harmony, and grace." †

The degree of knowledge is different in different individuals. This is, no doubt, partly owing to a difference in mental

* John iii. 8.

† Sermons by the Author, Glasg. 1816, Pp. 287—9.

capacity ; for, without a miracle, a weak illiterate peasant could not take the same comprehensive view of the truths of religion as a scholar and a philosopher. It is not the intention, nor the effect of the operations of the Spirit, to equalize our natural faculties. We might assign, as another cause, the different degrees of diligence, with which the study of the Scriptures is pursued ; for this is the promise : “ Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” * We must remember, too, that the Spirit distributes his gifts according to his own will ; that there is a sovereignty exercised with respect to the measures of grace, as well as the persons to whom it is communicated ; and that this is the primary cause, that some so much excel others in all spiritual endowments. But the nature of this illumination is the same in all, in the lowest as in the highest believer. It imparts certainty to the mind ; it discovers the excellence and goodness of the truths which are perceived ; it is the foundation of faith and holiness, and consequently of final salvation. It is in this way, I apprehend, that we must account for the assurance which all Christians feel of the Divine origin and authority of the Scriptures. The arguments by which we prove their inspiration are not generally known. Many have no opportunity of being acquainted with them ; nor is every person capable of entering into the train of reasoning by which the several topics are illustrated and confirmed. Yet every believer regards the word of God with unsuspecting confidence as the ground of his hope, and is borne up under all his trials, and in the view of eternity, by its promises. Shall we charge the illiterate Christian with implicit faith ? No ; he has the witness in himself that the Scriptures are true. The marks of divinity which his enlightened mind perceives upon them, and the effects which they produce upon his conscience and heart, convince him that they are what they claim to be, as the sun manifests himself by his own light to every man who has eyes. They have come to him in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Such was the conviction of the martyr, who declared that he could not reason for Christ, but could die for him.

The degree of knowledge which is necessary to salvation,

* Hos. vi. 3.

it would be presumptuous to attempt to determine. We may say safely, that no man will be saved in ignorance, for the first effect of the gracious operations of the Spirit, is "to open the eyes;" that he must know himself to be a sinner, and Christ to be the Saviour; but farther we do not venture to proceed. It belongs not to us to fix the standard, and as, should we do so, there would be danger of its being too high or too low, so it would want all authority, because there is no determination of this kind in the Scriptures. In children whose faculties are beginning to open, and in adults who labour under mental imbecility, the measure of knowledge must be necessarily small. But a faint ray, imparted to the mind from the eternal source of wisdom, is of more value than the full blaze of reason and learning. The revelation vouchsafed to babes, and often denied to the wise and prudent, is sufficient to shew the way to eternal life, and to guide them in it, notwithstanding insidious endeavours to draw them aside. "The way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err in it."

As the knowledge which the Spirit communicates is distinguished from other knowledge by its nature, so it is also by its effects. Other knowledge puffs up the mind with a vain conceit of its attainments; but this knowledge creates humility, not only by convincing us how little we know, but by giving a discovery of the guilt and vileness of our natural character. It likewise purifies the soul; for, while other knowledge is a mere exercise of intellect, this affects the heart, awakens new feelings, and tastes, and desires, inspires the love of God, and the noble ambition to be like him. It is a perception and relish of true excellence, consisting in the conformity of the creature to the moral image of its Maker. Hence our Saviour prayed, that his Father would "sanctify" his disciples "through the truth;"* and an Apostle says, "that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."† It imparts consolation and joy to the soul, while the enlightened man is fully persuaded of the precious promises of the Gospel, and regards its blessings as his own. And when we think of the ineffable satisfaction, the Divine peace, the bright and animating hope, which are inspired by

* John xvii. 17.

† 2 Cor. iii. 18.

the contemplation of the wonders of redemption, we understand the reason that Paul "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord;" and that other holy men have expressed the highest esteem for his word, and a decided preference of it to the wealth, and pleasures, and glory of the world. In a word, this knowledge is introductory to the more sublime discoveries of the future state. The objects which will be contemplated there, are the same which are exhibited in the Gospel; and, so far as any man is enabled, by supernatural illumination, to form just conceptions of them, he anticipates the knowledge which will flow from the beatific vision. The difference is not in kind, but in degree. The one is the knowledge of a child; the other is the knowledge of a man. Wherever the light of heaven has once appeared, it will "shine more and more unto the perfect day," when the mists and clouds which now obscure our prospects will be dispelled, and we shall "know even as we are known:" "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it." *

* Rev. xxi. 23.

LECTURE LVI.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE OFFICE OF PRIEST.—NECESSITY OF THIS OFFICE TO OUR REDEEMER.
—CHRIST'S CALL TO, AND INVESTITURE WITH IT.—DUTIES OF THE
OFFICE ; SACRIFICE, INTERCESSION, AND BLESSING OF THE PEOPLE.—
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON CHRIST'S EXECUTION OF THESE DUTIES,
AND ON HIS PRE-EMINENCE AS A PRIEST.

EVER since the fall the hopes of the human race have centred in the Messiah. He is the restorer of our fallen nature, the conqueror of our formidable adversary, the Mediator by whose ministry peace with God is procured, the second Adam who has removed the curse pronounced upon us for the sin of the first, and opened the gates of Paradise, that we might have access to the tree of life.

The design of the ceremonial institutions and the prophecies of the ancient law was, to make known this illustrious person, to describe his character, and to give notice of the purpose for which he would afterwards appear upon earth. Hence a general expectation of a great deliverer was excited ; but the ideas which many entertained of him, were the most distant imaginable from the truth. They believed indeed that he would be a Prophet, for the words of Moses, and of other inspired men, were too express to be mistaken. They believed also that he would be a King, who, marching forth in the terror of his power, would subjugate the nations, and restore the kingdom to Israel. But they seem not to have believed that he would be a Priest ; or if they allowed the title, they explained it in such a manner, as rendered it perfectly nuga-

tory, nothing appearing to them more inconsistent with the office of the Messiah, than the proper work of such a Priest, which was to redeem us to God by the sacrifice of himself. He was, however, not only to sit upon a throne, but also to minister at the altar; not only to exert his power for the destruction of his enemies, but to employ his interest with God in our behalf. He was to draw near to the Divine Majesty in our name, and to mediate a peace between us and our offended Creator.

That Jesus Christ is a Priest, is plain from many passages of Scripture which it is unnecessary to quote, because, whatever difference of opinion there is among his professed followers with respect to the import of the title when given to him, they all acknowledge that there is a sense in which the office belongs to him. What we mean by calling him a Priest, may be learned from the following definition of the character, although it does not comprehend every particular of the office. "Every High Priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins."* It is to the last part of the definition that I at present request your attention. A priest is a person officiating in the name of others, who approaches to God to make atonement for them by sacrifice. The design of his ministration is to render the object of worship propitious, to avert his wrath from men, and procure their restoration to his favour. He differs from a prophet, who treats with men in the name of God, making known to them his counsels and commands; while a priest treats with God in the name of men, to prevail upon him to admit them into friendship. It was in this sense of the word, that Aaron and his successors were priests. Their proper work was not to instruct the people, but to serve at the altar, and lay those oblations upon it which the law required for the expiation of sins. It cannot be denied that the title of priest is sometimes given to men, not in a literal but in a figurative sense. Thus Christians are called a "royal priesthood,"† and are said to be "made priests" as well as "kings to God."‡ It is evident, however, that in this case there is merely an accommodation of the title, because they minister to God in the duties

* Heb. v. 1.

† 1 Pet. ii. 9.

‡ Rev. i. 6.

of religious worship, and present the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, which ascend with acceptance to his throne, like the smoke of rams and bullocks, and of the incense which was burnt in the sanctuary. A proper priest offers a proper sacrifice.

A question here demands our attention, because it has been the subject of much and vehement discussion among Christians, Whether it was necessary that our Redeemer should sustain this office? The negative is held by those who believe that God might have pardoned sin without a satisfaction; and the affirmative, by those who are persuaded that it would have been inconsistent with the purity and rectitude of his nature, to permit sin to pass with impunity. It is certain that God is represented as a Holy Being, as necessarily and infinitely holy, so that in the strong language of Scripture, "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity."* There is here an allusion to men, to whom some objects are so disgusting, that they avert their eyes and find it impossible to look at them without doing violence to their feelings. The divine abhorrence of sin could not be more emphatically stated than by this mode of expression. God can do every thing which is consistent with his essential perfections; he can do nothing which is contrary to them, and he cannot because he will not. It is not the want of physical but of moral power which is ascribed to him. Now, if it is impossible that God should ever regard sin with favour, it is impossible that he should suffer it to go unpunished; his nature forbids such an act of sovereign, unconditional mercy. To impress this idea, his holiness is represented as his "jealousy," or as accompanied with it. "He is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins."† It is the nature of jealousy not to spare, and nothing but the execution of vengeance will satisfy its demands. This awful truth is declared in the solemn proclamation of his name, when he said that "He will by no means clear the guilty,"‡ that is, the guilty for whom no atonement has been made. "God is jealous," says the Prophet Nahum, "and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth

* Hab. i. 13.

† Josh. xxiv. 19.

‡ Exod. xxxiv. 7.

wrath for his enemies.”* It is to represent the punishment of the wicked as the consequence of his holiness, that our God is said to be a “consuming fire.”† Fire, indeed, burns by necessity of nature, God does not so act in any external operation. His dispensations originate in his will; but his will is always conformable to his essential perfections. Is it not then plainly signified by this figurative description, that as fire consumes every combustible substance which it reaches, so the nature of God requires that the transgression of his law should be punished, unless some expedient be devised to reconcile the exercise of his mercy with the honour of his holiness?

Again, the necessity of the priesthood of Christ may be inferred from the justice of God. As there is an essential rectitude of his nature, in consequence of which every thing which he does is right, sustaining the character of the moral Governor of the universe, he will render to all his creatures their due. Justice is ascribed to him in many passages of Scripture; and reason perceives so clearly that it belongs to him, that the question may be proposed as admitting only one answer, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”‡ What it is right for him to do in the character of a Judge, we learn from the law which he has given to men, and in which death is denounced as the penalty of sin. Let it not be imagined that this is an arbitrary penalty; for, since it would be a reproach to a human legislator to subject crimes to a severer punishment than they deserved, or than was necessary to maintain the authority of his law, we could not impute such procedure to God without a direct impeachment of his benignity and clemency. It is right, therefore, that transgressors should suffer to the extent threatened in the law. There is something in their conduct which deserves this punishment; and it is suitable to the moral perfections of God to inflict it. Now, let us consider what is implied in the supposition that God might have pardoned sin without an atonement. It is implied, either that it was not right that sin should be punished, that is, that it was not absolutely right, that it was not agreeable to the nature of God, that justice did not demand it; or that, in order to exercise his mercy, he might do what was not right. It is impossible to

* Nahum i. 2.

† Deut. iv. 24.

‡ Gen. xviii. 25.

maintain that sin might have been pardoned without an atonement, unless we at the same time affirm that punishment was not necessarily due to sin, or that God was not bound to recompense it according to its desert. If any man shall adopt the latter opinion, he must say, that what we call the justice of God is not justice, or that, when attributed to him and attributed to men, it has a different meaning. We always conceive justice in a private or a public person, to consist in treating others exactly according to their desert; and consequently, it is equally contrary to justice to let merit go without reward, and demerit without punishment. If it be alleged that, although justice requires that the penalty of his law should be executed, he may set aside its claims by an act of authority, I would request you to consider attentively the import of this assumption. If justice has a claim, to dispense with it is to do something which, if justice had been permitted to take its course, would not have been done. This is plain. Justice demands the punishment of sin, but the demand is not complied with, and therefore justice does not receive what is due to it. It follows, that to suppose that God may dispense with the claims of justice, is to suppose that he may cease to be just. Some men may not be alarmed at this consequence; but let it be observed that, if God may set aside in any case the demands of justice, justice is not essential to him; we can no longer have confidence in the rectitude of his moral administration; nor can his laws be regarded with the same reverence as when they were understood to be guarded by the immutable sanction of death. As the moral Governor of the universe, God is bound, if I may speak so, to maintain the respect due to himself by the strict distribution of rewards and punishments, and to hold out the most powerful motives to obey his law, which is not an arbitrary institution, but is founded on the relations subsisting between him and his creatures.

The inference from the preceding reasoning, is, that the priesthood of Jesus Christ was necessary, if God was to pardon sinners, and receive them into favour. It is this hypothetical necessity alone which we assert; as his susception of the office was voluntary, so his investiture with it by his Father was an act of his sovereign grace. God was under no

obligation to renew the intercourse between himself and man, which had ceased at the fall.

“No man,” says Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”* The necessity of a Divine call to the office is manifest from the nature of the case. A priest ministers before God in the name of men, to effect a reconciliation between them. Now, although it is their interest which is connected with the office, and no advantage can redound from it to God, yet they have not the power of appointing the priest, for two reasons; first, because it depends solely upon the will of God whether a priest shall be admitted at all; and secondly, because it is his prerogative to declare who is acceptable to him, and proper to be entrusted with so important a work. “So also,” the Apostle adds, “Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”† Great as his love was to sinners, he interposed in their behalf only in concurrence with his Father, and in obedience to his will.

With respect to the time of his investiture with this office, it was coincident with his appointment to the general office of Mediator. At that time, he was constituted the Prophet, the Priest, and the King of his Church. The manner of his consecration has been explained in different ways. He was consecrated, it has been said, at his baptism; and this is so far true, because he was then solemnly dedicated to the service of his Father; but he possessed the office before, and performed its duties, both by bearing our griefs and carrying our infirmities, while, yet in a private character, he led a life of poverty, labour and suffering of various kinds, and by the intercessory prayers which he no doubt offered up for the salvation of his people. It is the opinion of that eminent and learned Divine, Dr Owen, that he was consecrated by the shedding of his own blood, as Aaron and his sons were by the blood of the sacrifices; and this he conceives to be the import of the expression, “made perfect through sufferings.”‡ But this notion we can by no means admit, because it seems to be absurd to suppose a person to be conse-

* Heb. v. 4.

† Ib. 5.

‡ Heb. ii. 10. Owen on Heb. *in loco*.

crated to an office, by doing the duties of it ; to hold it, and proceed to perform its most important functions, before he is properly invested with it. His being “perfected through sufferings” evidently means, that, by his death upon the cross, he became the Captain or the Author of our salvation, having offered that atoning sacrifice, which obtained eternal redemption for us. It appears that he was consecrated by the oath of God, of which we shall afterwards speak, because it is an important fact in the history of his priesthood, and, as such, is mentioned in Scripture. “The law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity ; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”*

The two great duties of the sacerdotal office, are sacrifice and intercession ; to which may be added a third, the blessing of the people, as Aaron and his sons were commanded to do. I do not think it necessary to take any farther notice of the last in relation to our Saviour’s office, because it does not appear that, as a Priest, he blesses us in any other way than by dying to procure, and by obtaining through his intercession, the communication of blessings to us. It is properly in the character of a King that he bestows them.

The first duty of his office he performed upon earth, when he presented to God the immaculate oblation of himself upon the cross. “He hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour.”† This would be the place to prove that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin ; but I shall postpone this discussion to another occasion, as my design, in this Lecture, is merely to give you a general view of his priesthood. There are some who deny that he offered a sacrifice for sin, namely, those who were formerly called Socinians, but now have taken the name of Unitarians. The doctrine of that heretical sect is, in substance, the following ;—that Jesus Christ is called a Priest, but is not such in reality ; that he receives this title, on account of some resemblance between what he does, and the ministration of the priests under the law ; that he is a Priest, in the same metaphorical sense in which all Christians are said to be priests ; and, that

* Heb. vii. 28.

† Eph. v. 2.

his priesthood solely consists in the good offices which he performs towards us, and on our account. He properly entered upon it when he ascended to heaven, and received power from his Father to assist men in working out their salvation; his death upon the cross was no part of his duty, but merely a preparation for the services of the heavenly sanctuary; his priestly office is virtually the same with the kingly, both implying authority and ability to bestow blessings upon men, and differing only in this respect, that, as a king, he has power to help us, and, as a priest, he is willing.—This was the doctrine of the elder Socinians, and has been generally adopted by their successors. I know not well what are the sentiments of the Unitarians of the present day; but some of them “waxing worse and worse,” like other “evil men and seducers,” are actively employed in reducing the character of our Saviour lower and lower, and seem not to be able to tell where he now is, or what he is doing. I content myself, at present, with simply stating their doctrine, as an opportunity will afterwards occur, of shewing its contrariety to Scripture.

There is another Socinian notion, which, however, has been adopted by some who are not Socinians, but believe that the death of Christ was a sacrifice for sin, namely, that he did not offer his sacrifice on earth, but in heaven, by appearing before God in the body in which he suffered on the cross. You will find this notion stated and defended by Dr Mac-knight, in the notes on the epistle to the Hebrews; an author, I may take this opportunity of saying, from whose work on the Epistles, a cautious and discerning reader may derive considerable advantage, but who is a dangerous guide to young students, not only because he dogmatizes in rather an unusual manner in matters of great importance, giving only his own affirmation for proof, but also, because many of his principles are false, and there are few who have distinguished themselves more, by wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. This notion is at direct variance with the language of Scripture, which uniformly speaks of the sacrifice of Christ, as having been offered before he entered into heaven. “Christ was once offered,” says Paul, “to bear the sins of many,”* evi-

* Heb. ix. 28.

dently meaning, that he was offered upon earth, because he contrasts this act with his future revelation from heaven. "When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* His sitting down at the right hand of God was immediately consequent upon his entrance into heaven, before which he had purged our sins by his sacrifice. "By his own blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."† The obtaining of eternal redemption is put in the past tense,—*ἐπαμεινός*,—and preceded his entrance into the holy place. But he obtained it, as all will acknowledge, by his sacrifice, which, therefore, was offered not in heaven but upon earth. Great stress is laid upon these words of Paul, "If he were on earth, he should not be a priest."‡ But, if they furnish any evidence in favour of the present opinion, they prove more than its patrons would be willing to grant, namely, that while our Saviour was in this world, he was not a priest at all. This no man who believes the Scriptures would affirm. The meaning certainly is, that, if his office had been of the same kind with the priesthood which already existed upon earth, he could not have been a priest, because the office was vested in a family of which he was not a member; or that, if his whole office was to be executed upon earth, he must have been excluded, because, not belonging to the family of Aaron, he had no access to the holy of holies in the temple, in which alone his blood could be presented. The notion, that Christ offered his sacrifice in heaven, is one of those niceties which are sometimes brought forward as mighty discoveries, but which, although they were founded on truth, are of no practical utility. As it is, it overturns the ideas respecting sacrifices which men have entertained in all ages and nations, making them consist, not in the death of the victim, as has been always believed, but in the sprinkling of its blood; and it furnishes a pretext for those who are so minded, to deny that Christ offered any proper sacrifice, and to affirm that his whole work consists in intercession.

The second duty of his office is intercession. It was typified by the entrance of the high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and

* Heb. i. 3.

† Heb. ix. 12.

‡ Heb. viii. 4.

burned incense before the mercy-seat, and it is carried on in heaven, of which that place was a figure. What is the nature of his intercession, how it is conducted, who are its subjects, and what is its design, are points, the consideration of which I shall reserve for another occasion.* According to the scheme of the elder Socinians, his priestly office was executed in heaven alone; but, although they could not deny that intercession belonged to his office, they explained even it away, as well as his sacrifice, and affirmed, that it signified merely that he obtained from God the power by which he is able to help us, as if he had prayed for it. A similar scheme has been contrived by some modern Socinians, which may be stated in the words of a celebrated writer. "Jesus Christ has not only taught the pure doctrines of the gospel, manifested by rising from the dead the certainty of a future state, and proposed to mankind a pattern for imitation; but has, by the merits of his obedience, obtained, through his intercession, as a reward, a kingdom or government over the world, whereby he is enabled to bestow pardon and final happiness upon all who will accept them on the terms of sincere repentance. That is, in other words, we receive salvation through a Mediator; the mediation conducted through intercession; and that intercession successful, in recompense of the meritorious obedience of our Redeemer."† In this scheme, the atonement is left out, and our salvation is owing to the death of Christ only remotely, as it constituted the ground on which he obtained, by his prayers, power to save such as should sincerely embrace his religion. But his intercession has a different object, as we shall afterwards shew.

Our Lord was made a Priest "after the order of Melchisedec."‡ The Apostle Paul explains what is meant, when he says of Melchisedec, that he was "without father, without mother, without descent," and that "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, he abideth a priest continually."§ It is certain that, being a man, he was born and died like other men, and had a genealogy which was known to his contemporaries; but Paul refers to his history, which on these subjects preserves profound silence, and speaks of him only in his public character, and in relation to his office. He is an insulated indi-

* See Lecture LIX.

† Magee; on Atonement, vol. i. p. 20.

‡ Heb. v. 6.

§ Heb. vii. 3.

vidual, like a man fallen from the clouds, who had no earthly connexions, except that, as he was a priest and a king, there must have been persons for whom he ministered, and over whom he reigned. The similitude between our Saviour and Melchisedec may be traced in the two following particulars.

First, He had no predecessor in office. He was indeed made a priest after the order of Melchisedec; but you are not to understand that he was a priest of the same order, because, on this supposition, the resemblance between them would be destroyed in an essential particular. Christ did not succeed Melchisedec, but he is like him; and like him in this respect, that none was before him. Aaron and his sons were not his predecessors; for he could not have succeeded them unless he had belonged to the family to which the legal priesthood was confined by the express commandment of God. "It is evident," says Paul, "that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." * He succeeded them, indeed, as the antitype succeeds the type; but his priesthood was of a different kind. Theirs was a shadow, but his was the truth; theirs consisted in offering animals upon the altar, but his in offering himself; theirs averted temporal punishments from the Israelites, but his has delivered mankind from the guilt of sin, and from eternal perdition.

Secondly, Jesus Christ has no successor in the priesthood. It is in the perpetuity of his office that the resemblance between him and Melchisedec principally consists. When Aaron died, Eleazar his son stood up in his room; and all the high-priests of that family were succeeded by their sons and relations, till the second temple was destroyed; but no person will ever succeed our Saviour: and this difference between him and the priests of the law, was founded on two important circumstances:—

In the first place, "They truly were many priests," as Paul says, "because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death."† Notwithstanding the great dignity of their office, and the solemnities with which they were installed in it, they were but men, subject to infirmity and dissolution, like the persons for whom they ministered. "But this man,

* Heb. vii. 14.

† Ib. vii. 23.

because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." * He likewise died ; but the cases were totally dissimilar. The legal priests died, if I may speak so, out of office ; but he died in it. Death was no part of their work, whereas to die was the chief duty incumbent upon him. When they fell under the power of death, they could not extricate themselves from it, and return to life and the service of the sanctuary ; but he had power to lay down his life and to take it again. Death was so far from putting an end to his priesthood, that it did not even interrupt the exercise of it.

In the second place, A succession of the legal priests was necessary, because the sacrifices which they offered could not expiate sin. Notwithstanding their mortality, if any of them could have appeased Divine justice by his oblations, there would have been no necessity that another should rise up in his stead. But the legal sacrifices could not atone for past sins, and still less for those which were future ; the blood of an irrational animal was not equivalent to the blood and life of the transgressor himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ " hath by one offering for ever perfected them that were sanctified." † His sacrifice removed the sins of his people in one day ; it established, upon a solid basis, peace between God and his offending creatures ; it is the ground of an everlasting dispensation of pardon and mercy. Hence it appears that there was no reason why another priest should succeed him, and that no place was left for the ministrations of another, which could serve no valuable purpose, as the great design of the office had been already accomplished, namely, the expiation of sin.

The death of Christ was a sacrifice, not for one generation alone, but for men in every age. He ever lives to make intercession in the heavenly sanctuary ; and hence he is " able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him." ‡ No other priest, therefore, can arise. There remains nothing for him to do. Christ has made sacrifice and oblation to cease, and has gone into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us.

It is derogatory to the honour of Christ, and subversive of the doctrine of the Scripture concerning his priesthood, to

* Heb. vii. 24.

† Ib. x. 14.

‡ Ib. vii. 25.

maintain that any person is now invested with the priestly office, and performs its proper work. It implies that he did not fully accomplish the design of his office, and destroys the resemblance between him and Melchisedec. Yet the Church of Rome calls her ministers priests; (and so likewise does the Church of England, from an imitation which is the more inexcusable, as she rejects the doctrine upon which alone an argument could be founded for giving them this title;)—the Church of Rome calls her ministers priests, and affirms that they perform the proper work of the priesthood by offering sacrifice. Jesus Christ, into whose body and blood the bread and wine in the Eucharist are transubstantiated, is offered up in the mass by the officiating minister, as a sacrifice for the dead and the living. If this opinion were true, the ministers of antichrist would be more truly priests than Aaron and his sons; because the latter offered only typical sacrifices, while the former daily repeat the great sacrifice which procures eternal redemption. But this superstructure rests upon a foundation of sand. The sacred supper is merely a commemorative ordinance. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.”* The Christian religion acknowledges only one Priest, who was consecrated by God himself, and is exalted to heaven. Those who assume this character, encroach upon his prerogative; and to suppose them to be what they pretend, would be to consider our Redeemer as a Priest, not after the order of Melchisedec, but after the order of Aaron, which admitted successors.

Jesus Christ excelled all that were before him in respect of the order of his priesthood. There are other points of difference, from which it appears that, according to the words of an Apostle, “he has obtained a more excellent ministry,”† and of which I shall briefly take notice in the sequel of this Lecture.

First, He was superior to all other priests in personal dignity. They were “men having infirmity,” subject to disease and death, and not to these alone, but also to error and sin; and therefore they needed to offer for themselves as well as for the people. How much superior is our High-Priest! Considered as a man, he is distinguished from all other men,

* Heb. ix. 28.

† Ib. viii. 6.

not only by his miraculous conception, his sublime wisdom, and his stupendous works, but by his immaculate purity which he retained amidst the strongest temptations. But besides his pre-eminence in moral worth, he was still more exalted above all who might be compared with him, by the dignity of his nature, for in consequence of his mysterious union to the second person of the Trinity, he was truly the Son of God. While he is said to have "purged our sins," he is described as "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and as upholding all things by the word of his power." Surely, he is the most glorious of all the ministers of God! and the office derives a lustre from him who sustained it.

Secondly, The manner in which he was invested with his office was peculiar; and it is expressly mentioned in order to demonstrate his superiority. "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made a priest, (for those priests were made without an oath, but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant." † This circumstance alone is sufficient to prove the pre-eminence of his priesthood. It is not upon slight occasions that God interposes by an oath; and if he did not swear when Aaron and his sons were set apart to the service of the altar, but observed this unusual solemnity in the consecration of his Son, may we not conclude that there were interests of far greater importance depending upon his ministry? The design of the priesthood of Aaron was to prevent the dissolution of the covenant, which God had made with the Israelites. The design of the priesthood of Christ was the establishment of a better covenant, by which God would be glorified, and our lost world redeemed. The oath was intended to assure us that God himself invested him with the office; that as a priest he is the object of his highest approbation; that he will never take the priesthood from him, nor cease to be pleased with the atonement which he made by the effusion of his blood. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent."

Thirdly, The oblation which he presented was far more valuable than the ancient sacrifices. He offered not the

* Heb. i. 3.

† Heb. vii. 20—22.

firstlings of the flock, and the choicest of the herd, but himself. He was at once the priest and the sacrifice. What raised the worth of his sacrifice above all calculation was his personal dignity, of which we have already spoken. He who was crucified without the gates of Jerusalem was the Lord of glory, although the princes of this world did not recognise him in such profound humiliation; the blood with which the church was redeemed was the blood of God, although the priests and rulers of the Jews, who saw it streaming from his wounds, despised it as the blood of an impious malefactor. The God-head, it is acknowledged, is impassible; but from the union of the two natures of Christ, there resulted a communication of properties, in consequence of which the acts of both belonged to the same person, and are predicated of each other. That nature died which alone could die; but it was the nature of him who was higher than the kings of the earth, and the angels of heaven, because he and his Father are one. Compared with this oblation, those which were offered with such pomp in the temple of Jerusalem, were weak and childish things, and would be altogether unworthy of notice, were it not that God himself appointed them, and that they derived a borrowed importance from their typical relation to the sacrifice of Christ, the only sacrifice which God ever accepted for its own sake, and which satisfied the demands of his justice. Accordingly, the legal sacrifices are declared to be inefficient, and are laid aside, while the sacrifice of Christ is substituted in their room. "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo! I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first," says the Apostle, "that he may establish the second."*

Fourthly, Let us observe for whom Jesus Christ officiated as a priest. The sacrifices of the Mosaic law were appointed for the Israelites; the annual atonement was made for none but the twelve tribes, and their names alone were engraven on the breast-plate which the High-Priest wore when he went

* Heb. x. 5—9.

into the holy of holies. Jesus Christ is the High-Priest of the human race, and his blood was shed for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. "He is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world." * He suffered, therefore, not in the temple which was the sanctuary of the Jews, nor within the precincts of Jerusalem, the capital of their country, lest it should be imagined that they were the sole objects of redemption, but without the gates of the city, to signify that he was the Saviour of mankind, and that there was salvation through his cross to those who should turn their eyes to him from the ends of the earth. We do not affirm that he died for every individual of the human race. This extent some have assigned to his atonement; but, although it is their design to give a magnificent idea of its efficacy, their doctrine is really derogatory to its excellence. For upon this supposition it will follow, that as every individual is not saved, his sacrifice has failed of its end in the case of those who perish in guilt, and his blood has been shed in vain. He died for those whom his Father gave to him; but how great their number is, no man can tell. All ages have experienced the benefit of his death, the influence of which was retrospective and prospective, extending backward to the beginning of time, and forward to its close. For his sake God was merciful to those who lived before his coming in the flesh, pardoning them in the view of the satisfaction to be afterwards made; and now we know that there is salvation in no other, and that there is not another name under heaven given among men, by which they can be saved.

Lastly, The effect of his sacrifice demonstrates its transcendent excellence. No person, who has just notions of the evil and demerit of sin, can believe that the sacrifices of the law could appease the justice of God, and obtain his favour to the guilty. Reason gives a ready assent to the declaration of an Apostle, that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." † Their sole effect was to deliver the offerer from temporal punishment, whether to be inflicted by the civil magistrate, or by the hand of God himself. He was permitted to live, and to enjoy his privileges, although he deserved to be cut off for his transgression

* 1 John ii. 2.

† Heb. x. 4.

from among his people. But he had no security against eternal condemnation, and fell under it at death, if he had not an interest by faith in that better sacrifice, of which those which he had presented were merely shadows. The oblation of Christ satisfied every demand of justice, and cancelled the sentence pronounced by the moral law upon all who have violated its precepts: "He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness." * Hence forgiveness is preached through him; and those who believe, "are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." † Nothing is necessary to our full pardon, but faith in the great propitiation; no supplementary penances of our own, no kind of satisfactory works. A foundation is thus laid for perfect peace of mind; and the only reason that believers do not always enjoy it, is the weakness and unsteadiness of their faith. No purpose of vengeance against them ever arises in the mind of God, however great are their provocations. He may frown upon them; but it is the frown of a father, who will not cast off his son, although he is displeased with his conduct; he may chasten, but it is the hand of love which wields the rod, and the design of every stroke is the good of the sufferer.

It appears from what has been said, that the priesthood of Christ is not a speculative point, but a doctrine intimately connected with our duties and our hopes. It is the foundation of all acceptable religion; and had he not sustained this office, intercourse between heaven and earth would have been for ever suspended, and God and men would have been separated by irreconcilable hostility. The religion of man in a state of innocence, was founded on the natural relations subsisting between him and his Creator, to whom, as the Author of his being, he owed obedience, and from whose goodness he was authorised to hope for felicity continued through an endless duration. But when sin had introduced mutual alienation, the interposition of a third party was necessary to adjust their opposing interests, and to unite them in the bond of friendship. As God can thus be merciful without ceasing to be just, so the way is prepared for the acceptance of our

* Dan. ix. 24.

† Acts xiii. 39.

duties, notwithstanding the imperfections with which they are attended. Coming from us, who are so polluted that every thing is tainted which we touch, they are unworthy of the Divine regard ; but they are purified by passing through the hands of “the Minister of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not men.” * This is an unspeakable advantage which Christians derive from the priesthood of Christ ; for, although they should multiply their services, and perform them with assiduity and earnestness, they would not be pleasing to God, if he did not recommend them. As, while the sword of the cherubim waved dreadfully before the gate of paradise, our first parents could not have forced their way to the tree of life, the seat of immortality ; so, the curse of the broken law rendered access to the throne of grace equally impossible to us their descendants ; but Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life,” or the true and living way ; and “having him as our High Priest over the house of God, we may draw near with true hearts in the full assurance of faith.”

* Heb. viii. 2.

LECTURE LVII.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

DEATH OF CHRIST, A PROPITIATORY SACRIFICE.—SOCINIAN VIEW OF HIS DEATH; ITS DEFECTS.—THE MIDDLE SCHEME: OBJECTIONS TO IT.—PROOF OF THE CATHOLIC DOCTRINE.—THE IDEA OF SACRIFICIAL ATONEMENT PREVALENT AMONG THE HEATHEN.—SACRIFICES OF ATONEMENT, A PART OF THE JEWISH WORSHIP.—IMPORT OF THE LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE RESPECTING THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

THE death of Christ is one of the most remarkable events recorded in history. Many ages before it happened, it was foretold by those men whom God raised up, to uphold the authority of his law among his chosen people, and to direct their thoughts and expectations to a future and more perfect dispensation. David, Isaiah, and Daniel described the Messiah not only as a person of high dignity, and the Author of the most glorious works, but also as one who should lead a lowly and afflicted life, and terminate his labours and sorrows by a painful and violent death. The cause or occasion of it was singular; for it was not the effect of accident, or disease, or the decay of nature, but was inflicted by a judicial sentence pronounced upon him for the supposed crimes of imposture and blasphemy. The obscuration of the sun at mid-day without any natural cause, the earthquake which clove asunder the rocks and laid open the graves, and the rending of the veil of the temple from top to bottom, proclaimed that he who was hanging on the cross was no ordinary sufferer. He had not lain three full days in the grave, when he was restored to life by the power of God; and, after an interval of a few

weeks, he ascended to heaven in presence of his disciples. Ten days after, he poured out the Holy Ghost, by whom they were enabled to publish to men of every nation, in their respective languages, the wonders of his death and resurrection; and the effect was not less surprising than the means employed to accomplish it. The attention of Jews and Gentiles was excited; multitudes were prevailed upon to acknowledge him to be the Son of God, and the Messiah; and a Church was formed, which, notwithstanding powerful opposition and cruel persecution, subsists at the present hour. The death of Christ was the great subject on which the Apostles were commanded to preach, although it was known beforehand, that it would be offensive to all classes of men; and they actually made it the chosen theme of their discourses. "I determined," Paul says, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."* An ordinance was appointed by our Saviour himself on the night preceding his crucifixion, for the express purpose of being a memorial of it to the end of the world. In the New Testament, his death is represented as an event of the greatest importance,—as a fact on which Christianity rests,—as the only ground of hope to the guilty,—as the only source of peace and consolation,—as, of all motives, the most powerful, to excite us to mortify sin, and to devote ourselves to the service of God. It is remembered in heaven, and we have reason to believe that it now is, and ever will be, the theme of the songs both of the redeemed and of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and strength, and glory, and blessing."†

It is evident from this detail, that there is something peculiar in the death of Christ, something which distinguishes it from all other events of the same kind, and renders it more worthy of attention. It is necessary, therefore, that we should entertain just conceptions of it; by which I do not merely mean, that we should know when it happened, and with what circumstances it was attended, but that we should endeavour to ascertain from the Scriptures what was our Saviour's design in submitting to die upon the cross. From the earliest ages Christians have believed that his death

* 1 Cor. ii. 2.

† Rev. v. 12.

was an atonement for sin, a sacrifice offered to God to satisfy his justice, and avert his wrath from the guilty ; that it was the means of reconciling us to our offended Creator, the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life. In this view of it, all the great bodies into which professed Christians are divided are agreed,—the Eastern and the Western Church, Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians. They may differ in their explanation of the nature of the atonement, its extent, and the means of its application ; but with regard to the general truth, that the death of Christ was propitiatory, there is no conflict of opinion. This may be considered as a presumption in favour of the doctrine, and at least shews that there is an apparent foundation for it in the Scriptures ; because if there were no trace of it there, we could not well account for the consent of so many parties, separated on other points by so wide an interval. It will hardly be denied, that the Scriptures seem to favour this view, by using language, in speaking of his death, which was appropriated to the sacrificial institutions of the law ; and those whose interest it is to evade this evidence, confess its existence by their anxious and violent endeavours to bring the style of the New Testament to a consistency with their system.

The doctrine which has been received by the Catholic Church, is controverted by one class of nominal Christians, by the same persons who deny the divinity of our Saviour, and maintain his simple humanity. Those two articles of their creed harmonize, for if Jesus Christ was a mere man, it is impossible to believe that his death possessed such merit as to redeem that great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. They alone can with any appearance of reason consider his death as an expiation of sin, who are persuaded that the blood shed upon Calvary was divine. It would be absurd to suppose, that the sufferings of a common descendant of Adam, who was himself not exempt from human frailties and imperfections, were accepted as a full compensation for myriads of transgressions. The following is a summary of the sentiments of Unitarians. “ The great object of the mission and death of Christ, was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motives to virtue ; and the making an ex-

press regard to the doctrine of a resurrection to immortal life, the principal sanction of the laws of virtue, is an advantage peculiar to Christianity. By this advantage the gospel reforms the world, and the remission of sin is consequent on reformation. For although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the sufferings, the merits, the resurrection, the life or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude, upon a careful examination, that all those views of it are partial representations, and that, according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is in reality always dispensed by the free mercy of God, upon account of man's personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever." Thus the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ is discarded; and, according to them, when the Scripture says, that he gave himself for us, that he died for our sins, that we have redemption through his blood,—all that is intended is, that his doctrine, confirmed by his death, is the means of leading us to repentance and amendment of life, in consequence of which we are pardoned, and entitled to a happy immortality. It is a thought which will naturally occur to you, that if this is the actual amount of what the Scriptures teach upon this subject, the terms which the sacred writers have employed, serve only to encumber and darken the sense, and that it would have been better to have expressed the simple truth in plain terms not liable to be misunderstood, and not to have enveloped it in metaphors and allusions, by which thousands have been misled.

Let us attend more particularly to the account which is given of the death of Christ by those who deny the atonement, that having found their reasons to be inadequate, we may be the better prepared to receive the Catholic doctrine, which alone accords with the statements of the sacred writers.

Sometimes they speak of his death as an accidental event, as having taken place in consequence of the wickedness and perverseness of the age in which he appeared, and thus insinuate that among a different people he might have escaped without persecution. How contrary this opinion is to truth, and to the belief of a particular providence, they need not to

be told, who remember that he was delivered up by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God, and that his death was predicted by the prophets, and prefigured by the institutions of the law. If it was accidental, it is evident that no stress can be laid upon it, that it could not be an essential part of the scheme of religion which God was carrying on, and that, in itself, it was of no greater moment than the death of any other good man who has fallen a victim to calumny and malignity.

There is a notion entertained by Socinians, which if true would militate against the supposition, that the death of Christ ought to be considered as an atonement for sin, or that any merit attached to it ; for they hold that death is not the penalty of transgression, but the consequence of the original law of our nature. Man would have died, or might have died, although he had continued in innocence. When Jesus Christ therefore expired, we may apply to him the expression, which however common is very inaccurate, that he paid the last debt to nature ; and since he was originally mortal, his death was not an act of choice, and could not be a voluntary sacrifice. I need not stop to refute this opinion, the falsity of which was demonstrated when we pointed out the effects of Adam's transgression. It is sufficient to repeat the well known words of the Apostle, " By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned ;" * and the words of our Lord, " No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." †

But although Socinians have sometimes talked in this loose manner, that the death of Christ might excite as little attention as possible, yet they have found it necessary from the general tenor of Scripture, to admit that it had some important end, and have racked their invention in order to give a plausible account of it.

In the first place, They tell us that he died to give us an example of patience, resignation, faith and hope ; and thus far they are countenanced by Scripture, which says, " Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow

* Rom. v. 12.

† John x. 18.

his steps ;" * and addresses this exhortation to us : " Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."† But the question is, Was this the only design of his sufferings? Does the giving of an example exhaust the meaning of the language of Scripture on this subject? We grant that he has left us an example, but we deny that this was the only object which he had in view ; and we pronounce it to be false reasoning to hold any single end which is gained, to be the only end contemplated by the person who employed the means. Every man knows the distinction between a subordinate and an ultimate end, and is aware that, unless both be considered, we do not understand the design of the agent. If it was the sole purpose of the death of Christ, to give us an example, we cannot avoid thinking that the means were disproportionate to the end ; and it seems incredible that a just and good Being would have subjected a person so excellent as Unitarians acknowledge him to have been, pure and spotless in his life, and richly furnished with supernatural gifts, to the most cruel torments, solely that we might learn how to behave under our afflictions. We might have been taught this lesson at less expence ; and it does not appear to be a happy expedient for recommending submission, to place before us the spectacle of a person enduring the severest sufferings, although he had neither sinned himself, nor become responsible for the sins of others. The moral efficacy which is ascribed to the example, is destroyed by the nature of the case. Nothing will induce us to acquiesce in the will of God, when its operations are painful to our feelings, but a full conviction of his justice and benevolence. But the agony and blood of one who had never offended, are calculated to create fear and distrust, and to represent the Ruler of the universe, rather as a despot than as the Father of the human race.

In the second place, They tell us that he died to attest the truth of his doctrine. I grant that this is true, but in a sense which they will not allow. He died to confirm the promises of God, by paying the price of the blessings exhibited in them, and securing the enjoyment of them to believers. " All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, to the glory

* 1 Pet. ii. 21.

† Ib. iv. 1.

of God.” * But his death had this effect, because it was an atonement for sin, by which the anger of God was appeased, and his favour was restored. I deny that he was a simple martyr for the truth, and is to be classed with Stephen, and James, and Antipas, and other holy men, who have sealed their testimony to religion with their blood. Considered in itself, his death would not have proved the truth of his doctrine ; it would have proved only that he was fully persuaded of its truth. This is all that we can justly infer from the sacrifice which a man makes for his principles ; if we go any farther, as there have been martyrs for different religions, we should be compelled to conclude, that they are all equally true. It was not necessary that he should die to confirm his doctrine, because he had already established it upon the solid basis of his miracles. To these he appealed, saying, “ Believe me for the very work’s sake.” † They demonstrate that he was a messenger from God, and consequently, that whatever he delivered in the name of God, was to be received without murmuring and disputing. They were admitted as evidence by all persons of candour, and with respect to those who were dissatisfied, we may say, that they would not have believed, although one had risen from the dead. “ Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him.” ‡ Hence we conclude, that this was not the design of his death. His dying for the truth could not have afforded clearer evidence than his miracles, nor considered in itself, evidence so clear. What followed it, indeed, namely his resurrection, is the grand demonstration, that he was the object of the divine approbation ; but it is so, because he was put to death as an impostor and blasphemer, and was not at all necessary, independently of these charges against him, to vindicate his claim to the character of a messenger from God. The proof was so complete before his last sufferings, that those who rejected him were without excuse, as we learn from his own words : “ If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin ; but now they have no cloak for their sin.” §

Once more, They tell us that he died to give us the assurance of eternal life, that we might be led to faith and obe-

* 2 Cor. i. 20. † John xiv. 11. ‡ Ib. iii. 2. § Ib. xv. 22.

dience, through which we obtain the remission of sin. At first sight, it seems strange and far from the truth, that the painful and ignominious death of an innocent person should avail to persuade us, that a recompence is prepared in a future state for those who lead a holy life upon earth. Appearances are directly in the face of such an expectation. Aware of this difficulty, Socinus said that this hope, which exerts so happy an influence upon us, is not properly the effect of the death, but of the resurrection of Christ, and is ascribed to his death, because it necessarily preceded his resurrection. But if this were the truth, the Scripture would have made mention of his resurrection, or rather of his ascension to heaven, and his sitting at the right hand of God, when it speaks of the remission of sin, and not of his death and sufferings, at least not so often, and in such significant terms. The frequent, and almost constant, conjunction of his "blood" with remission, indicates that the latter is not a remote, but the proximate effect of it. To what purpose is this circuitous method? Remission is granted to those only who obey the commandments of God; faith, and the hope of a reward, as Socinus affirms, are motives and excitements to obedience; this faith is generated by the consideration of Christ raised from the dead, and exalted to glory on account of his holiness; but death preceded his resurrection, and therefore remission is fitly said to be obtained by his death. That which is near, or separated by a moderate interval, is not assigned as the cause, but that which is removed to a great distance from the effect; the first step in the process is given as the cause of the result, while it ought to be ascribed to the last step, which goes immediately before it; and this is done not once, but uniformly. Who can believe that the Scripture expresses itself so inaccurately and obscurely? To speak of his death when it means his resurrection, of which his death was not the cause but the antecedent, is just as proper as to speak of night when we mean day. A slight perusal of the sacred writings will convince any man who is not prejudiced, that this is not the true account. He will find that the remission of sin is not attributed to the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, or to the effect which these events are calculated to produce upon our minds, but expressly to his death; and

that his death, as distinguished from his resurrection and exaltation, is stated to be the procuring cause of our redemption. "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* Our reconciliation, which implies the pardon of sin, was effected by his death, and not by the life which he now leads in heaven.

In a word, they tell us that Christ died in order to obtain the power of forgiving sin. But to this assertion we oppose the fact, that he possessed this power before his death; and it is absurd to suppose him to have died for the purpose of acquiring what was already his own. He repeatedly said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." It is observable that, on one occasion, he used these words, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;"† as if he had meant to provide for the refutation of those who affirm that this power was subsequent to his ascension. He had power to forgive sins while he was on earth, in his state of humiliation; and that it does not signify, as some pretend, simply the power of healing diseases, will appear on consulting the passage, where there is a clear distinction between the pardon and the cure of the paralytic; the one having taken place before the other, and the cure being expressly declared to be the sign and confirmation of the pardon.

This view of the death of Christ, as the means of obtaining the power of forgiving sin, leads me to take notice of another theory, which has been called the middle scheme, because it admits more than the Socinian, and less than the Catholic system. This statement, however, is not perfectly accurate; because Socinus himself, and his immediate followers, who allowed to Jesus Christ supreme authority over men, held in substance the doctrine which has been supposed to be peculiar to the scheme now to be considered.

The middle scheme agrees with the Socinian in rejecting the atonement, but it accords thus far with the Catholic, that it maintains the intervention or mediation of Christ in a qualified sense, as necessary, or at least as appointed, for the restoration of the guilty to the favour of God. It proceeds upon this principle, that God, who is infinitely merciful,

* Rom. v. 10.

† Matth. ix. 6.

may pardon the transgressions of his creatures freely, and might have pardoned them upon repentance, but that it appeared expedient to his wisdom, and conducive to the interests of his moral government, to exercise his mercy to them, not immediately, but through the interposition of another person. This friendly office was performed by Jesus Christ, whom the abettors of this system do not consider as the eternal and consubstantial Son of God, but as the first and most glorious of created beings, by whom the world was made. Pitying our fallen race, he generously engaged to assume our nature, to submit to poverty and persecution, and to suffer crucifixion, that he might acquire the right and power to carry into effect his benevolent design. His services were highly acceptable to God; and, in consideration of them, there has been granted to him, upon his intercession, a kingdom or government over men, authorising him to bestow pardon and eternal life upon those who repent and obey. In confirmation of their scheme, they appeal to certain cases mentioned in Scripture, as being analogous, and as evincing its conformity to the manner in which the Divine administration is conducted; to cases in which the sins of others were pardoned at the request of good men, and from respect to their virtues. Thus, great privileges were conferred upon the Israelites, to reward the piety and obedience of Abraham; the idolatry of the people in the wilderness was pardoned when Moses interceded for them; and God heard the prayer of Job for his three friends, against whom his anger was kindled, because they had not spoken of him the thing that was right.

As this system admits a Mediator, although it confines his duty to intercession founded on his previous sufferings, it enables its advocates to make a plausible use of the language of Scripture, and to say with truth, according to their limited views, that we are saved by the blood of Christ, that we are forgiven for his sake, that we are redeemed to God by the death of his Son. It seems also to guard the honour of the Divine government amidst the exercise of mercy, by not treating the sins of men as light and venial, and pardoning only from respect to the merits of a being of a higher order, through whom their repentance is accepted.

It will occur, however, to your minds, that the Scriptural phrases concerning the death of Christ must be interpreted in a low sense, that they may be brought to accord with the scheme now under consideration. We are saved by the death of Christ, not as an atonement, for this idea is expressly excluded, but as a preliminary step to our salvation, or as the appointed means of obtaining the power to save us, or rather the power to prescribe the terms of our salvation. If it be said that this power was merited by his sufferings, and, consequently, that they are in truth the primary cause of our salvation, we remark that, after all, no more is ascribed to them than might be ascribed to the sufferings of a mere man, on whose account some favour should be conferred upon his family and friends. He has received wounds or lost his life in the service of his country, and his country testifies its gratitude by rewarding those who are related to him. All the arguments drawn from the terms in which the death of Christ is spoken of, to prove its propitiatory nature against the Socinians, bear with equal force against the scheme of intercession. It is true, according to both systems, that he did not die as our Surety, and bear our sins in his own body on the tree. This scheme, in short, is an expedient which has been devised, not to interpret Scripture according to the genuine sense, but to explain it away ; to evade, on the one hand, the obnoxious idea of atonement, and to seem, on the other hand, to attribute to our Saviour's death some powerful efficacy in our redemption from sin. It is liable to the objection against the Socinian system, that it does not satisfactorily account for the sufferings of an innocent person, as on all hands he is acknowledged to have been. It may display the goodness of God, but it reflects upon his justice, with which it is impossible to reconcile the sufferings which Christ underwent by Divine appointment, although he was free from personal or imputed guilt. In short, although it has been called a beautiful theory, it will not appear in this light to the man who thinks, and thinks justly, that the beauty of a moral system depends upon its truth ; and, to a person who has studied and understood his Bible, it will not have even the merit of speciousness, because, before it could impose upon him for a moment, he must have forgotten all that he had read.

I have said that it is an objection against this and the Socinian system, that they do not satisfactorily account for the death of an innocent person. That our Saviour was without sin, we may assume as an incontrovertible fact, upon the testimony of Scripture; and we reject with abhorrence the insinuation of modern Unitarians, who have dared to insinuate that, although his public life was blameless, he might not be exempt in private from the imperfections incident to humanity. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." * According to all our ideas of justice, an innocent person has a right to live in peace under the protection of the laws, and we should exclaim against the government which should molest him, as oppressive and tyrannical. Yet we are not surprised when such a person is persecuted by men, because we know by experience what are the fatal effects of calumny and envy, and how often power is abused from caprice, and ignorance, and passion. But, in heaven we look for a pure administration, and it is a principle of reason and religion, that the righteous are acceptable to the Ruler of the world, and are the objects of his peculiar care. The sufferings of our Lord did not originate solely from men; the agency of God was concerned in them, and they all, indeed, befel him either by his immediate interposition, or by his appointment and permission: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief." † Some tell us that, in virtue of his sovereignty and supreme dominion, God may subject his creatures to sufferings without a cause; that he is not bound to give an account of his proceedings to us; that, if an angel in heaven, or the holiest man upon earth, were severely afflicted, it would be sufficient to say, that such is his will. Were this doctrine admitted, our antagonists could explain the mystery of the cross without any difficulty. But those who hold it have forgotten that the Lord of the universe is not a despot, but a righteous and beneficent Governor; they take a partial view of his character, and sink all his other perfections in that of his power. They have forgotten, too, that he has prescribed a law to himself, from which he will never deviate; a law expressly declaring that he will render to every man according to his deeds. Hence

* 1 Pet. ii. 22.

† Is. liii. 10.

we conclude, with the utmost certainty, that when any being suffers there is a just cause. We are at no loss to account for the sufferings of men, whatever are their attainments in piety and virtue, knowing, as we do, that each of them is a sinner ; but what reason shall we assign for the sufferings of Him, who was proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, in whom he was well pleased ? Here both the systems which we have reviewed entirely fail. They give no explanation in which a well instructed mind can acquiesce. To say that Christ was subjected to sufferings for the benevolent purpose of conferring important benefits upon mankind, is to give the highest sanction to the principle, which is so strongly reprobated in the Scriptures, that evil may be done that good may come. To say that, although his sufferings were great, he has been amply rewarded for them, is to set up the plea, that a person may be treated unjustly in the mean time, provided that justice shall be done to him at last, and to vindicate any arbitrary exercise of power, if the victim of it is not an ultimate loser. Such a procedure would be condemned in a human governor, and is not to be attributed to Him who is the architype of justice to kings and princes.

You have heard the reasons which are assigned for the death of Christ, by those who deny that it was an atonement for sin. If they have proved unsatisfactory, the doctrine of the catholic church remains unshaken ; and it is a presumption in its favour, that all the attempts to substitute something better in its place have failed of success. Before, however, we are authorised to pronounce it to be true, we must ascertain that it is not only preferable to other views of the subject, but that it is agreeable to Scripture, from which only the real design of the death of Christ can be learned. It is not our business to contrive a variety of hypotheses, and try which of them is most suitable, but to inquire what our Saviour himself and his disciples have said upon this important subject.

I begin by observing, That the idea of atonement has prevailed among all nations and in every age of the world, and that, accordingly, sacrifices have been offered with the view of propitiating the Deity. From what source the idea and the practice were derived, is a question about which learned

men have been divided in sentiment. Some have maintained that sacrifices were an invention of men, who hoped, by the offering of something valuable, to gain the favour of the Being whom they worshipped, as we seek to conciliate the good will of our superiors by gifts ; and others contend that they originated in the command of God to our first parents after the fall. Without engaging in this controversy at present, I simply remark upon the improbability that a thought, apparently so extravagant, should have ever occurred to the human mind by its own suggestion, as that the wrath of Heaven would be appeased by the slaughter of unoffending animals. Whatever gave rise to this service, it is certain that such sacrifices held an important place in the religion of the heathens, and continue to be offered in one form or another, by idolatrous nations. Nay, in some cases, a nobler sacrifice was deemed necessary ; a human victim was dragged to the altar ; and the guilty hoped to wash away² their own sins with the blood of one of their brethren. These things are mentioned to shew, that a sense of guilt has been universally felt, accompanied with the fear of punishment, and that a persuasion has obtained, that there was no possibility of escaping with impunity, except by the suffering of another in the room of the transgressors. They are a proof that, notwithstanding the loud exclamations against the atonement of Christ, as an impeachment of both the goodness and the justice of God, the human mind has, with great uniformity, approved of the idea of substitution, and has found in it the best resource against the terrors of conscience.

But this statement has been controverted, and it has been confidently affirmed, that, from a review of the religions of all nations, ancient and modern, they appear to be utterly destitute of any thing like a doctrine of proper atonement ; that a general belief has prevailed of the benevolence of the Deity ; and that nothing has been deemed necessary to conciliate his favour but repentance and the practice of virtue. The power of prejudice is great. It hides from the mind the plainest truths, and leads it to draw the most illogical conclusions ; it reconciles it to palpable absurdities, and renders it impenetrable to the most cogent arguments. But there are some cases in which the utmost stretch of charity cannot admit the power

of prejudice as an apology. It is impossible to believe, that a man of learning and good sense has been so blinded by its influence, as to mistake the whole history of mankind upon a particular point, and not to see what, to every other person, presents itself with the brightness of a sun-beam. Either Dr Priestley, who has made the strange assertion which I am now considering, had never read the history of the various religions of the human race, and in this case was guilty of presumption and dishonesty in pronouncing positively concerning their tenets; or, he has published to the world, with a view to support his own system, what he must have known to be utterly false. It would disgrace a school-boy to say, that the heathens knew nothing of expiatory sacrifices. Dr Magee has refuted his assertion by an induction of particulars, which shew that it is destitute of the slightest foundation. He has proved, that “a great part of the religion of the Pagan nations consisted in rites of deprecation; that fear of the Divine displeasure seems to have been the leading feature in their religious impressions; and that, in the diversity, the costliness, and the cruelty of their sacrifices, they sought to appease gods, to whose wrath they felt themselves exposed, from a consciousness of sin, unrelieved by any information respecting the means of escaping its effects.”* Hence the practice of human sacrifices among, not only the Phenicians, the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Carthaginians, but also the learned Greeks, and the civilized Romans; and hence the doctrine of the Druids, as related by Cæsar in his Commentaries, that, unless the life of men were given for the life of men, the immortal gods would not be appeased.† The gods are often represented as angry, and the idea of propitiating them is expressed by a variety of terms. To turn away the wrath of another, was signified among the Greeks by the verbs *ἱλασκεσθαι*, *εἰρηνοποιεῖν*, *καταλασσεῖν*, *ἀποκαταλασσεῖν*, and among the Latins, by the words *placare*, *pacare*, *conciliare*, *reconciliare*, and *propitiare*. The act and the effect were called by a single word in both languages; in the one *ἱλασμος*, and in the other *placamen*.

I observe again, that prior to the coming of Christ sacrifices were offered, not only of thanksgiving, but of atonement,

* Magee on Atonement, Vol. i. No. 5.

† De Bello Gall. lib. vi.

by the worshippers of the true God, in obedience to his command. Such appears to have been the sacrifice of Abel, because it consisted of the firstlings of his flock; and that he had authority for what he did, we infer from the words of the Apostle, who says, that he offered by faith,* which pre-supposes a Divine revelation. This single passage, independently of other considerations, might decide the question respecting the origin of sacrifices. Such are the sacrifices of Job for his sons, lest they should have sinned during the days of feasting; and for his friends, who had sinned in their speeches, and were directed by God himself to adopt this method of averting his anger. When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, a law was given to them, enjoining sacrifices, appointing a particular family to the priesthood, ordering an altar to be built, and specifying the animals to be used, and the time and manner of offering them. When any of them had transgressed, a sacrifice was prescribed, upon offering which his sin was pardoned, and the penalty was remitted. There were sacrifices also for the whole congregation, in the morning and evening of every day, and on the anniversary of expiation, when the high-priest officiated, and entered into the holy place with the blood of the victim, which he sprinkled before the mercy-seat, signifying that it was only through an atonement that God would continue to be gracious to the people. In a word, the whole system proclaimed and illustrated this truth, that "without the shedding of blood, there was no remission of sins."† No hope was given to the Israelites, of the protection and blessing of the Almighty, unless they were purified by sacrifices. If it be said, that the death of animals without reason, could not satisfy Divine justice for the sins of men, we grant that, although they freed the offerer from ceremonial, they could not free him from moral guilt; but hence we infer, that the sacrifices of the law were shadows and figures of a nobler oblation, by which eternal redemption has been obtained.

We should have thought it so clear, that sacrifices were enjoined by the ancient law, and were of a propitiatory nature, that no person would have ventured to dispute it; but it has been asserted, that the Jews had no notion of expiatory

* Heb. xi. 4.

† Ib. ix. 22.

sacrifices ; or that, if they had any such notion, it was derived from the heathens, contrary to the common opinion, that the heathens derived the notion from them. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Old and the New Testament, than that their sacrifices were piacular. The idea is unavoidably suggested by the language of the law, and by the nature of the rites which it prescribed ; and it is still retained by the Jews, although they are aware of the argument drawn from thence for the true and proper sacrifice of Christ, and would for this reason have been strongly tempted to renounce it. It is the doctrine of the modern Jews, that the mercy of God accepted the sacrifice of the animal in the room of the offerer, and appointed that in offering it he should lay his hands upon it, to remind him that the victim was received as his vicarious substitute. In order to prove that the ancient sacrifices were not of an expiatory nature, it is alleged, that they were required in cases where no guilt could be supposed. In the cases of the high-priest, the ruler, private individuals, and the whole congregation, a sacrifice was enjoined, when they had sinned through ignorance ; and ignorance, it is insinuated, must have exempted them from criminality. Ignorance, however, may not signify the absolute want of knowledge, but inattention and inconsiderateness, which, being itself culpable, would not excuse the conduct to which it gave rise ; or, if they were really ignorant, they were still to be blamed, because it was their duty to have made themselves thoroughly acquainted with the law which God had given them, and to have kept it constantly in mind. The truth seems to be, that the sins spoken of did not proceed *ex ignorantia juris*, but from want of reflection, from the sudden assaults of temptation, and the violence of passion ; and they are opposed to presumptuous sins, sins committed with a high hand, that is, deliberately, against knowledge, and the present conviction of the mind. The former are called sins as well as the latter ; but this difference is made between them, that those were expiated by a sacrifice, whereas for these no atonement was provided. “ If a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord ; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring a ram without blemish out of the flock, with

thy estimation, for a trespass-offering, unto the priest : and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not, and it shall be forgiven him.”* Again, sacrifices were required from those who had been cured of leprosy, and from women after child-bearing, and in neither case, it has been said, can sin be supposed. It is the observation of a Jewish writer,† that “without committing sin, no person is ever exposed to suffering ; that it is a principle with the Jewish doctors, that there is no pain without crime ; and that, for this reason, she who had endured the pains of child-birth, was required to offer a piacular sacrifice.” With regard to the leper, it has been remarked by the same person, that “a sin-offering was enjoined, because the whole Mosaic law being founded on this principle, that whatever befalls any human creature, is the result of Providential appointment, the leper must consider his malady as a judicial infliction for some transgression.”‡ And certainly the loathsome disease of his body was an emblem of the natural pollution of the soul, and reminded him how necessary it was to seek the favour of that Being who had smitten him once, and might smite him again. But, although a case had occurred, in which we could not discover any vestige of guilt, manifest or implied, it would not, in the judgment of any reasonable man, furnish an objection against the general import of the legal institutions, which so clearly teach, that an atonement is necessary to avert the anger of God.

I observe farther, That the Scriptures affirm, in the most express terms, that the death of Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice. They use the same language in speaking of that event, which is used concerning the piacular services of the law. He is called a priest, and the work of a priest is assigned to him. “Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices ; wherefore, it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.”|| It is said, that “he gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour,”§ and the same thing is asserted in many other passages. It is affirmed, that “he died for our sins according to the Scrip-

* Lev. v. 17, 18. † Abarbanel. ‡ See Magee, vol. i. Note 33.

|| Heb. viii. 3.

§ Eph. v. 2.

tures ;" * that " he bore our sins in his own body on the tree ;" † that " he is the propitiation for our sins ;" ‡ that " he was made a sin-offering for us ;" § that " by his death we are reconciled to God ;" ¶ that " he has redeemed us to God by his blood." ¶ This is the general strain of the New Testament, and I am not aware of a single expression which has a different meaning. One should think, that language so express, and occurring in so many places, would be sufficient to settle the question, whether the death of Christ was of an expiatory nature, and that no man who feels any reverence for the word of God, and submits to it as the rule of his faith, would venture to controvert this position, or allow a doubt to remain in his mind. But some persons are not so easily satisfied. They have conceived a prejudice against the doctrine, and will not be convinced by any evidence. Hence they have recourse to the same expedient, by which they endeavour to set aside the proofs of the Divinity of Christ, namely the pretence that the words are not to be understood according to their usual import. They cannot deny that he is called a Priest, and his death a sacrifice ; but they allege that the literal sense must be rejected, for no reason which I can discover, except that it is at variance with their system. Christ, they say, was a metaphorical priest ; his death was a metaphorical sacrifice ; and what follows, but that he has obtained for us a metaphorical redemption, that is, no redemption at all ?

As the Scriptures were given to instruct us in religion, it may be presumed that they are written in language which all may understand. To suppose that the style is highly figurative even in the didactic parts, that plain truths are wrapt up in metaphors, that the real is often different from the apparent sense, is to throw a most injurious reflection upon the word of God, and would justify the church of Rome in withholding it from the common people as a book liable to be abused by them. No person who has read the Old Testament, can be ignorant what is meant by a sacrifice. He understands it to have been a victim slain and offered upon the altar, in order to avert the anger and procure the favour of God. When he finds that, in the New Testament, the death

* 1 Cor. xv. 3.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

‡ 1 John ii. 2.

§ 2 Cor. v. 21.

¶ Rom. v. 10.

¶ Rev. v. 9.

of Christ is called a sacrifice, and considers that both parts of revelation proceeded from the same Author, he is necessarily led to believe that the word retains its ancient sense, and that Christ died in our room to reconcile us to God. We account him a blundering writer, who uses the same word upon the same occasion in different senses ; and we call him an unfair writer, who, by changing the meaning without warning, seeks to impose upon his readers. To tell us that we ought to beware of being misled by the sound of words, and that, in the passages which speak of the death of Christ as a propitiatory oblation, nothing is intended but an allusion to the sacrifices of the law, is to tell us that we may seek truth where we please, but we shall not find it in the Scriptures.

If a person is honestly inquiring after truth, he will have recourse to no shifts, no far-fetched and overstrained methods of establishing a particular point. There will be no prejudices admitted in favour of one opinion, and against another ; there will be no reluctance to receive evidence, on whatever side it may present itself ; there will be a cautious and diligent use of all the means, by which a correct view of the subject is likely to be obtained. Truth alone being his object, there will be no temptation to step out of the way which leads to it. When the question regards the sense of a particular author, he will proceed according to the plan pursued on all such occasions, and understand the terms in their common acceptation, unless it clearly appear that the author has designedly deviated from the established usage. He will not attempt to make him express sentiments different from those which he seems to express, if he is writing historically or didactically, without assigning a reason sufficient to satisfy any competent judge. If we see a person taking a different method, wresting words from their obvious import, talking of metaphors when the literal sense is perfectly intelligible and spontaneously presents itself to the mind, trying to find out, not what they naturally signify, but what they may be made to signify by the dexterity of bold and unprincipled criticism, and converting the text into an enigma, the recondite meaning of which can be discovered only by conjecture and not by any rational rules of interpretation ; we have ground to suspect that he is not honest, and that his aim is, not to come at the truth, but

to establish a doctrine of his own. Such is the procedure of Socinians, with respect to the atonement and the Divinity of Christ. It is itself sufficient to put every man upon his guard, and betrays a conviction, on their part, that the Scriptures as we have them, and their system, cannot stand together. Socinianism requires a new Bible, or, what amounts to the same thing, an improved version; that is, a corrupted text, and an equally corrupt interpretation.

LECTURE LVIII.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE ATONING SACRIFICES OF THE LEVITICAL LAW AND THE DEATH OF CHRIST, TRACED AND PROVED.—CHRIST A SUBSTITUTE, AND HIS DEATH AN ATONEMENT.—NOTICE OF OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE.

WE have ground, for believing that the death of Christ was an atonement for sin, in the language of Scripture, which, being borrowed from the sacrificial rites of the law, is applied to that event in such a manner, as to leave no doubt that his death was considered by the sacred writers as having the same nature, and the same design, with the ancient oblations. But, in order more fully to establish the doctrine, let us take a closer view of the legal sacrifices, and observe how exact is the correspondence between them and the death of Christ in every thing essential. If we find that it has all the characters of a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we cannot hesitate to view it in this light, and to regard it as the procuring cause of pardon and eternal life.

The first point of resemblance is found in the substitution of the sacrifice. It was put in the place of the person who offered it, and was called an offering for his sin, or for his soul. It was not a free gift, a token of gratitude, or a tribute paid by a subject to his sovereign, but a vicarious oblation, which was slain to signify the death which he deserved, and to save him from personally undergoing the penalty. As this

notion of a sacrifice is obviously taught by the law, so it was adopted by the Jews and by the Gentiles, who both considered the victim as given for them, as occupying their place. This was signified by the act of laying his hands upon the head of the victim, by which the offerer transferred his guilt from himself to the devoted animal, that it might be punished in his stead. Jesus Christ was substituted in the room of sinners ; and hence he is called *εγγυος*, “ the *surety* of a better covenant.” * A surety is one who gives security for another, that the other will fulfil his engagements, or, in the case of failure, that he will fulfil them for him. Some say that he was surety to us for God, having engaged that God would perform his promises ; or surety for us to God, having engaged to him that we should perform the condition of the covenant. Both ideas are inadmissible, and the true meaning is explained by the Apostle in another place, when he says, that Christ was “ the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” † He was a Surety who undertook to die for those whom he represented.

The substitution is evident from those passages in which he is said to have died *for us*, *ὑπερ ἡμῶν*. It is acknowledged that the preposition *ὑπερ* sometimes signifies merely *on account of*, or *with a view to the advantage of* ; but it does not follow that, in reference to the death of Christ, it imports only that he died for our good, to confirm his doctrine, and to set us an example. It is beyond doubt, that it also signifies *in the room of*, and bears this sense when it occurs in connexion with the verb *αποθνήσκω*, both in the Scriptures and in the classics. “ The Socinians,” says Raphelius, “ will not find one Greek writer to support a different interpretation.” ‡ In this sense it occurs repeatedly in the writings of Xenophon : *Η και εθελοις αν ὑπερ τουτου αποθανειν ;* || “ would you be willing to die for this boy ?” that is, as is evident from the context, “ Will you die in his stead ? save his life by parting with your own ?” *Αντιλοχος του πατρος ὑπεραποθανων*—§ “ Antilochus *dying for* his father” obtained such glory, that he alone among the Greeks was called *φιλοπατωρ*. The

* Heb. vii. 22.

† Heb. ix. 15.

‡ Raphelii Annot. tom. ii. p. 253, 254.

|| De Cyri Exped.

§ De Venat.

preposition retains the same sense in the New Testament. When Caiaphas the high-priest said, that it was expedient *ἵνα εἰς ἀνθρώπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ, καὶ μὴ ὅλον το εθνὸς ἀποληται*, he manifestly signified that our Lord should be put to death as a victim for the Jews, that by his death they might be saved from the vengeance of the Romans. He was to be like the *περιψήματα* and *περικαθαρματα* of the Greeks, men who were taken from the multitude and slain, that the anger of the gods might be appeased. “Scarcely—*ὑπὲρ εἰκαίου*,—for a righteous man will one die, but for a good man, —*ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*—some would even dare to die.”* Persons might be found to lay down their lives for such a man. The Apostle is unquestionably speaking of a case of substitution, of the voluntary sacrifice of one life for another. The preposition, therefore, must by all the laws of criticism have the same import, in the words which immediately follow: “But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,—*ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀπέθανε*.”†

The same inference may be drawn from the use of the preposition *ἀντι*, which conveys the idea of commutation and substitution. The law says, *οφθαλμος ἀντι οφθαλμον, οδός ἀντι οδοντος*, requiring that the man who had put out the eye or the tooth of another, should lose one of his own. To render *κακὸν ἀντι κακόν*, is to do an injury to our neighbour, because he has done an injury to us. In these cases, the general idea is that of commutation. The preposition also denotes substitution and succession, or coming in the room of another. Thus, Archelaus reigned over Judea,—*ἀντι Ἡρώδου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ*—“in the room of Herod his father.”‡ And in what other sense but this of substitution can we understand it in the following words? “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”—*δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ λύτρον ἀντι πολλῶν*.§ The preposition ascertains the action to be vicarious, to be an action performed by one person, not only for the benefit, but in the room of another, as a benevolent man would lay down the price demanded for the liberty of a captive, which the captive himself was unable to pay. The life of sinners was forfeited, and it was redeemed by the life of the

* Rom. v. 7.

† Ib. 8.

‡ Matth. ii. 22.

§ Matth. xx. 28.

Saviour. The word *λυτρον* signifies a price of any kind, but is limited to the sense of a ransom by the occasion, being *λυτρον αντι πολλων*, for the deliverance of many. There is a compound noun, *αντιλυτρον*, which is used by Paul, when he says, that Christ gave himself “a ransom for all, to be testified in due time;” * intimating, in the most intelligible manner, that his death was not merely the means, but the price of our redemption, and, consequently, that his sufferings were vicarious.

When we affirm the substitution of Christ, we suppose that our guilt was legally transferred to him, so that he was made answerable for it; and, in this respect, there is a resemblance between him and the ancient sacrifices. They were called sin-offerings, and simply *חטאת*, *sin*,—the same term being employed to denote the transgression and the oblation for it, because there was a translation of the one to the other, or the latter was considered as bearing the former. This translation was represented by a significant rite. When the priest, the ruler, or any one of the common people, brought for a sin-offering a bullock, a goat, or a kid, or a lamb, each was commanded to lay his hand upon its head; and the meaning of the rite is evident from what was done on the great day of atonement. Two goats were then presented, of which the one was to be slain and offered for a sin-offering, but the other was to be sent by the hand of a fit person into the wilderness, in order to represent the removal of guilt as the effect of the sacrifice. That the design might be understood, and might make a proper impression upon the spectators, “Aaron,” says the law, “shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.” † There seems to be an allusion to this rite, and certainly the same thing is expressed by the prophet, when he says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him

* 1 Tim. ii. 6.

† Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

the iniquity of us all." * They were laid upon him, as the sins of the Israelites were laid upon the scape-goat. To the same purpose are the words of the Apostle, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." † I add the testimony of Peter: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree: by whose stripes ye were healed." ‡ The sins which he bore on the cross, were not his own, but ours; and "his bearing them" implies, that they had been laid upon him as a burden under which we were sinking into perdition, and from which he was graciously pleased to relieve us. It is an obvious inference from these passages, that there was a transference of the sins of men to our Saviour, as the sins of the Israelite were transferred to the animal which he brought to the altar. Christ having voluntarily engaged to give satisfaction to Divine justice for us, they were reckoned to him, as a debt is reckoned to a surety when the debtor himself is insolvent, and the creditor looks to the surety for payment. God dealt with him as if the sins had been his own; he inflicted punishment upon him as if he had been the offender. This is what we mean by saying that our sins were imputed to him; he came under an obligation to bear the penalty. They were only imputed to him, but not accounted really his own. This was impossible; for God, who always judges according to truth, would not charge one person with having committed the sins of another. Such a charge would be false, and never was, nor ever will be, made. We cannot, therefore, read without disgust and detestation the language in which some high-flyers have indulged,—men who carried every thing to excess, and exposed important doctrines to reproach, by the unguarded and presumptuous manner in which they expressed them; not hesitating to call our blessed Lord a sinner, and the greatest of sinners, and to maintain that, during his last sufferings, he was separated from God and disowned by him, and was odious and abominable in his sight. These are not the words of truth and soberness, but the ravings of impiety or insanity. Such men did not understand the translation of guilt, which merely implies an obligation to punishment, but no moral taint, and was so far

* Is. liii. 6.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

‡ 1 Peter ii. 24.

from rendering our Lord an object of the displeasure of his Father, that he never was the object of higher approbation than when he was expiring on the cross. The voluntary susception of our guilt, while in himself he was perfectly pure, could not for one moment change the sentiment of entire complacency with which his heavenly Father had always regarded him. Without sin, he was a sin-offering, bearing the iniquities of those whom he had undertaken to redeem. He owed nothing to justice for himself, but he owed much as the Surety of men. His death was accompanied with such circumstances as shewed that it was a penal act ; for, besides its shame and its torments, it was that kind of death which the law had pronounced to be accursed ; and the preternatural darkness at his crucifixion, was a visible symbol of the frown of the invisible Creator.

The animal which was substituted in the room of the offending Israelite, and over which he had confessed his sin, was slain, and laid upon the altar. Life was given for life ; the life of the animal, which God was pleased to accept, instead of the life of the man. “ The life of the flesh is in the blood ; and I have given it unto you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls ; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” * That Jesus Christ died, is a fact about which there is no dispute ; but, with respect to the design of his death, we have seen that his professed followers are far from being agreed. It is granted that he died for our good, that he submitted to crucifixion to attest his doctrine, and give us an example ; but that his death was a sacrifice of atonement, some men confidently deny. Upon their hypothesis, there was no material difference between his death and that of many other holy men, who laid down their lives for the truth, and, at the same time, were admirable patterns of faith, and patience, and hope. We assert, that he died as the substitute of the guilty ; that death was a punishment inflicted upon him for our sins, which were the impulsive cause of his sufferings, and, in this sense, he was made a curse for us ; and that the great design was, to give satisfaction to Divine justice. This view is founded upon the passages formerly quoted to prove his substitution, passages which assert,

* Lev. xvii. 11.

that "he gave himself for us;" that "he was made sin," or a sin-offering, "for us;" that "he died for all;" that "he bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" that "he suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." In a case where the defence of a particular system was not concerned, it would be acknowledged to be contrary to the laws of sound interpretation to understand, by such expressions, merely that the death of Christ has been productive of some benefit to mankind. I should wish to know, from those who wrest them from their obvious sense—the sense which they have suggested to all men but themselves—in what stronger terms the inspired writers could have expressed themselves, if it had been really their design to inform us that Christ died, not only for our good, but to atone for our sins; and whether the usage of the language, and the prevailing sentiments of those for whose instruction they wrote, would have led them to employ other terms than those which they have actually employed. If their words do not teach that the death of Christ was a true and proper sacrifice for sin, we must say that this is an idea which human language is incapable of communicating. Is it possible to be more explicit than Peter is, when he affirms, that Christ suffered for sin, or as a sin-offering, the just for the unjust? Surely every man must see, who has not wilfully shut his eyes, that the just One suffered in the room of the unjust; suffered that they might not suffer; that his death was vicarious, and he submitted to it that he might bring us to God, or effect a reconciliation between us and our offended Creator. There is no perceptible difference between his death and the legal sacrifices, but this—that, in the one case, it was an animal without reason which was slain, and in the other, it was a man, the Son of the living God, who was the victim. His death is called a sacrifice, without the slightest hint of a metaphor. "He offered himself," as the Levitical priest offered the goats, and lambs, and bullocks, which were required by the law, "he offered himself without spot to God;" "he appeared in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;"* to accomplish at once what was typified by the legal oblations. He was a "Lamb

* Heb. ix. 14, 26.

slain ;" the " Lamb of God, which took away the sin of the world." *

Attempts have been made to neutralize the evidence furnished by these passages in favour of the doctrine of atonement. When Christ is said to have borne our sins, we are told that this does not mean that he bore the punishment of them, but that he bore them away ; and that he bore them away, by procuring the offer of pardon upon repentance, or by presenting motives fitted to turn us from our sins, in consequence of which we are forgiven. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, it is said, " Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." † In order to prove, from this verse, the propitiatory nature of the sufferings of Christ, the two words which express what he has done in reference to our sins,—נשא and סבל, translated *borne* and *carried*,—have been carefully examined, and their import has been ascertained by a comparison of other passages in which they occur. The result is given by Dr Magee in the forty-second note.‡ Both signify, not to bear *away*, but to *bear* or *sustain*, as a person bears a burden, and this is evidently the sense in all cases where sin is spoken of ; " the suffering, or being liable to suffer, some infliction on account of sin, which, in the case of the offender himself, would be properly called punishment." " We are told that God *made the iniquities of us all to fall upon him*, who is said to have *borne the iniquities of many* : thus is the *bearing of our iniquities* explained to be the *bearing them laid on as a burden* ; and though a reference is undoubtedly intended to the laying the iniquities of the Jewish people on the head of the scape-goat, which was done, (as is urged by Socinus, Crellius, Taylor, and other writers who adopt their notions,) that they might be borne, or carried *away* ; yet this does not prevent them from being borne *as a burden*. The great object in *bearing our sins*, was certainly to bear them *away* ; but the manner in which they were borne, so as to be ultimately borne away by him who died for us, was by his enduring the afflictions and sufferings which were due to them ; by his being " numbered with transgressors," treated as if he had been an actual transgressor, and made *answerable*

* Rev. v. 6, &c. John i. 29. † Is. liii. 4. ‡ Magee on Aton. vol. i.

for us, and consequently wounded for our transgressions, and smitten for our iniquities, in such a manner that our peace was effected by his chastisement, and we healed by his bruises; he having borne our iniquities, having suffered that which was the penalty due to them on our part, and having offered himself a sacrifice for sin on our account." * Peter alludes to this passage in Isaiah, when he says, "that Christ—*τας ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν αὐτὸς ἀνενέγκεν ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον*,—bore our sins in his own body on the tree." † It has been contended, that the verb *ἀναφέρω* here signifies to bear away; but literally it means to carry up from a lower to a higher place, and is used to express the act of sacrificing: "Who needeth not daily, like the high priest—*ἀναφέρειν θυσίας*—to offer sacrifices for sins." ‡ It does not seem to occur in the sense of bearing away. In the passage under consideration, if it convey any idea beyond simple bearing, it signifies to carry up, and intimates that Christ carried up our sins to the cross, having previously taken them upon him, that he might there bear the punishment of them, as the legal sacrifices were carried up to the altar, and laid upon it, that they might be consumed.

It has been objected to the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, which imports that he endured the punishment due to our sins, that he did not actually suffer the punishment to which we were liable, for his sufferings were temporary, whereas eternal death is the doom of transgressors. The objection comes with an ill grace from Socinians, who deny the eternity of future punishment, unless they mean to refute us from our own principles, or to use the *argumentum ad hominem*; but from whatever quarter it comes, it involves a difficulty which may occur to the attentive inquirer. It has been frequently said, that eternity is not a necessary adjunct of the punishment of sin, but arises from the limited capacity of creatures, who could not endure, in a definite time, the full execution of the penalty. I am disposed to call in question the accuracy of this statement, and to believe that it is not from the weakness of the subject that suffering will be perpetual, but because the penalty implies the final forfeiture of happiness, and that, by the constitution of things, the loss

* Magee, vol. i. p. 461. † 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Heb. vii. 27.

incurred is a total and irretrievable loss. Sin separates the creature from the Creator, without the possibility of reunion. Be this as it may, I remark, that, in considering the atonement of Christ, we are not to inquire what was the *quantum* of suffering, in order to ascertain whether it bore an exact proportion to the sufferings which would have fallen to the lot of those whom he died to redeem. Some men have allowed themselves to go into estimates of this kind, and have presumptuously, and, in my opinion, nonsensically maintained, that the sum of suffering was so nicely adjusted between our Saviour and the objects of his love, that, if there had been a single person more to be saved, his sufferings would have been proportionably augmented. They seem to have imagined, that he actually endured all the pain which the millions of the redeemed were doomed to endure throughout the whole of their being. We should scarcely have expected arithmetical calculations to be introduced into a subject so little connected with them; but human speculations are sometimes pushed to an extravagant and ridiculous length. This comes from understanding our sins to be debts in a literal sense, and the sufferings of Christ to be such a payment as a surety makes in pounds, shillings, pence, and farthings. I remark by the way, that they have gone to the opposite extreme, who have ventured to affirm, that one drop of the blood of Christ would have been sufficient to redeem the world. They might be asked to tell us, why he shed so many drops, and even poured out his soul unto death, and whether they seriously believe that he suffered more than was necessary for the salvation of mankind? To return to the first calculators, they entirely overlook the personal dignity of our Saviour, which must have given an unspeakable value to his sufferings; for, had this been taken into the account, they would have seen, that such an accumulation of pain as they imagine was unnecessary. According to their hypothesis, the dignity of his person added nothing to the value of his sufferings, nor did they need to be enhanced by it, as they were equal in degree to the appointed sufferings of his people. We can hardly speak, without presumption, upon a subject so mysterious and awful. His sufferings were great, beyond the power of language to express, or of imagination to conceive ;

but if we admit that all the acts of his human nature were finite, we cannot consistently say that his sufferings were infinite in degree, and must consequently admit that their transcendent worth was owing to the union of that nature to the Divine. He did not, therefore, suffer all the pains and sorrows of sinners, but he suffered what was equivalent. It was the blood of the Son of God which was shed ; it was the Lord of glory who was crucified. Hence, although his sufferings were temporary, they satisfied the demands of justice, and were a valid ground upon which God might pardon the sins of believers. It was not necessary that the sacrifice should remain for ever upon the altar, because it was so superior in worth to all former sacrifices, so precious in itself, that, in the language of Scripture, God “smelled a savour of rest.”

Perhaps our ideas are not always distinct, when we speak of the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin. That word, indeed, is used to signify any thing with which the person having a claim is contented, whether he receive the whole that he claims, or only a part of it, or something instead of it. In law, it strictly signifies a payment which may or may not be admitted according to the pleasure of him to whom it is due ; and it takes place when not the very thing is done which he had a right to demand, but something which he is pleased to accept as an equivalent. In the present case, what the law demanded was the death of the transgressors themselves ; it was therefore a relaxation of the law, to admit another to die for them ; and, on this account, the death of Christ was properly a satisfaction to justice, something with which it was content, although not the very thing which it originally required. It is on this ground that sinners were not *ipso facto* set free from guilt and condemnation, but continue under them till they believe. The reason is, that they did not themselves undergo the penalty, but another underwent it in their room ; and the Lawgiver had a right to settle the terms of their actual deliverance. We need not, therefore, puzzle ourselves with inquiring how much Christ suffered ; for, besides that this is a question which we are not competent to decide, it is enough to know, that he suffered all that was necessary, to demonstrate the Divine abhorrence of

sin, to maintain the authority of the law, and to exclude the impenitent from the hope of impunity.

The same effect is ascribed to the death of Christ, as to the ancient sacrifices ; and both are said to have averted the anger of God, and procured his good will and favour to man. Upon offering the appointed sacrifice, an Israelite was exempted from the penalty incurred by transgression, and was permitted to retain his place in the congregation, and to enjoy his political and ecclesiastical privileges. This expression is frequently subjoined to the precept respecting offerings to be made on particular occasions : “ The priest shall make atonement for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him.”* This is the prayer to be presented on the occasion of offering a heifer when a person had been slain, and the murderer could not be discovered : “ Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel’s charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.”† If, then, the death of Christ has accomplished the design of sacrifices, we may justly conclude, that it was a sacrifice in the true and proper sense. The blessings which we enjoy by it are, pardon, peace, and the favour of God. “ He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”‡—“ We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”||—“ Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”§ There were some sins for which that law provided no sacrifice, and the transgressor died without mercy : the superior excellence of this sacrifice appears from its unbounded efficacy, there being no sin, however aggravated, which will not be remitted to him who believes. In a word, Christ is said to have made peace by the blood of his cross, to have redeemed us to God with his blood, to have redeemed

* Lev. iv. 26, 31, 35, vi. 7, xii. 8, &c.

† Deut. xxi. 8.

‡ Rom. iv. 25, v. 1, 2.

|| Ephes. i. 7.

§ Acts xiii. 38, 39.

us from the curse, to have delivered us from the wrath to come, to have made us kings and priests unto God, even our Father. It is plain, from these and many other passages which it is unnecessary to quote, that the removal of guilt, the repeal of the condemnatory sentence, and the hope of eternal life, are attributed to his death as the procuring cause.

The design of sacrifices was to appease the anger of the Deity ; Jews and Gentiles agreed in this idea. Jesus Christ is called a “merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,” *—*εις το ιλασκεσθαι τας αμαρτίας του λαου*,—literally, *to propitiate the sins of the people* ; but the expression is evidently elliptical, and is put for *εις το ιλασκεσθαι Θεον περι των αμαρτιων*, *to propitiate God for the sins of the people*. The design of his death was to make God propitious to men, to avert his anger, and procure his favour. This is what we mean by making atonement for sin. Such an atonement as consists in the destruction of sin by repentance, and the acquisition of habits of holiness, (and this is the only atonement which Socinus would admit), could not be expressed by *ιλασκομαι*, or its derivative *ιλασμος*. It is well known that *ιλασμος* signifies an atonement, something done or suffered to reconcile an offended person ; and it is repeatedly applied to our Saviour, obviously for the purpose of informing us what was the design and the effect of his death. “He is—*ιλασμος*—the *propitiation* for our sins.” †—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be—*ιλασμον*—a *propitiation* for our sins.” ‡ Paul makes use of a different word, but of the same derivation,—“Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation*—*ιλαστηριον*.” § It is the word employed by the Seventy, to express the covering of the ark of the covenant, which was called the mercy-seat ; and they have joined with it the word *επιθεμα*. *Ιλαστηριον επιθεμα*, is the *propitiatory covering*. § Hence, some read the passage, “Whom God hath set forth a mercy-seat.” ‘Christ,’ say Unitarians, ‘is what the mercy-seat was under the former dispensation. In him God shows himself merciful. Here he takes his stand, and declares his gracious purposes.’ Their meaning is, that Christ is the messenger of Divine mercy,

* Heb. ii. 17. † 1 John ii. 2. ‡ Ib. iv. 10. § Rom. iii. 25. § Exod. xxv. 17.

the medium of Divine communication ; and thus they get rid of the idea of atonement. Grotius supposes *ιλαστηριον* to be a noun, and says, that all words of this termination import an efficient power, and are improperly understood as merely declarative, and, consequently, that *ιλαστηριον* here signifies, that Christ has made God propitious. Others, regarding it as an adjective, think that a noun is understood, either *ιερειον* or *θυμα*, and that the meaning is, God hath set him forth as a propitiatory sacrifice ; *ιλαστηριος* the adjective signifying *having the force or power to propitiate or expiate*. And, that this is the true sense of the word, is plain from two considerations : First, The Apostle calls him *ιλαστηριον*, “ a propitiation through faith in his blood,” intimating, that it was the effusion of his blood which propitiated, as under the law it was the blood of the devoted animal which made an atonement. Secondly, Something more than a declaration of mercy must be intended, because the design of setting him forth as a propitiation was, “ to declare the justice of God in the remission of sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.”* We can understand how Divine justice was displayed, if Christ died for sin, or suffered the punishment of it ; but there is nothing like justice in a simple declaration of mercy.

The atoning nature of the death of Christ is signified, when its effect is said to be “ our reconciliation to God,” and is expressed by the verbs *καταλασσειν* and *αποκαταλασσειν*, and by the noun *καταλλαγη*. “ When we were enemies—*κατηλλαγημεν*,—*we were reconciled* to God by the death of his Son.” † “ We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received—*την καταλλαγην*—*the reconciliation*.” ‡ It is objected, that it is no where said that God was reconciled to us, but that we are reconciled to him ; and such a reconciliation does not signify the averting of his anger against us, but the laying aside of our enmity against him. We may ask those who advance the objection, whether they believe that God was not offended at the sins of men ? If they say that he was not, they give the lie to innumerable passages, in which his abhorrence of sin, and his determination to punish the sinner, are declared ; and they virtually maintain, that holiness and justice

* Rom. iii. 26.

† Ib. v. 10.

‡ Ib. v. 11.

are not perfections of his nature. If they admit that sin is displeasing to him, and vengeance is proclaimed against the sinner, they must also admit, that not only we are reconciled to God, but he is reconciled to us; that having been once angry, he is now pacified. Whether they will allow that this change was effected by the death of Christ or not, they can neither deny that it does take place, and is owing to some cause, nor object to the idea itself with any appearance of reason. He who once threatened to punish another, but has since pardoned him, and now treats him with kindness, has certainly been reconciled to him. If his sentiments towards him were always the same, his appearances of displeasure were a dramatic show inconsistent with sincerity. The argument that God is not said, in express terms, to have been reconciled to us, is of no weight, while his reconciliation is implied in other phrases, as that he hath made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled those who once were alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, and that Christ is a propitiation for sin, or has made God propitious to us, with whom, on account of sin, he was formerly displeased. The objectors have been misled by not attending to the true import of *καταλλάσσεσθαι* and *διαλαττεσθαι*, which is also used in the New Testament. Such words are employed in the classics to signify, the removing of the anger of the gods, and bear the same sense in the sacred writings. They signify, to return to a state of peace with a person whom we had offended, to pacify him and render him friendly. Thus, when our Lord says in the Gospel of Matthew, if “thy brother hath ought against thee,” has some ground of offence, “go and—*διαλλαγήθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου*—be reconciled to thy brother,” * nothing can be plainer, than that the offender is not exhorted to lay aside his enmity to his brother, although this is understood; and that the purpose of going to the offended person is, to reconcile him by confession and reparation, to appease his anger, and persuade him to be at peace with the offender. Here then the phrase, be reconciled to another, signifies to reconcile the other to us; and why should not the word have the same meaning, when it is used in reference to God? We are reconciled to him, as we are reconciled to our injured brother; something is done which

* Matth. v. 24.

disposes him to receive us into favour. Now, the cause of the reconciliation which the Scripture assigns is, the death of Christ, and, consequently, his death was a propitiatory sacrifice. The Apostle explains our being saved from wrath, by "our receiving the reconciliation." * To receive the reconciliation is to obtain the remission of our sins ; but to receive our conversion, which is the sense of Socinians, is a form of speech altogether unprecedented. The two reconciliations of God to sinners and of sinners to God, are mentioned in the fifth chapter of the second Epistle to the Corinthians. Of the first the Apostle says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." † Thus, reconciliation consisted in forgiving them, that is, in ceasing to be angry with them, and receiving them into favour ; and how it was effected we learn in general from the mention of Christ as a person by whom the world was reconciled, and in particular from the words subjoined for explanation. "For he made him to be sin," or "a sin-offering for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." ‡ This reconciliation was evidently on the part of God, who, by the mediation of Christ, opened the way for the exercise of his mercy in pardoning the guilty. It cannot mean our personal reconciliation to God, or our conversion, for this follows as a consequence of the former. On the ground of God's reconciliation to us, we are exhorted to be reconciled to him, and the great motive or encouragement is his previous reconciliation. "He hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God." || ' Since God has given Christ to be a propitiation for sin, and has sent us to proclaim the joyful tidings, do you accept the offer of peace, and enter into covenant with him.' We are reconciled to God, when we are justified by faith.

It is false to affirm, that God is never said to be reconciled to us ; and consequently this argument against the propitiatory nature of the death of Christ falls to the ground. It is equally false to affirm, that God was reconciled before he sent his Son into the world, and that therefore Christ did not die to recon-

* Rom. v. 9, 11. † 2 Cor. v. 19. ‡ Ib. 21. || 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. }

cile him. We acknowledge that it was because he loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. But this love was merely a benevolent purpose to deliver us by proper means, and proceeded no farther than to provide those means. He had not actually forgiven us, but was willing to forgive us, if a sufficient atonement was made. He appointed Christ to die for transgressors, that he might receive them into favour in perfect consistency with his threatenings against sin, and the righteousness of his administration. He was content, nay he willed, that the grounds of his displeasure against us should be removed; but, till they were removed, he was not actually reconciled; and hence our pardon and restoration are not represented as the immediate effects of his original purpose to save us, but are ascribed to the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour. "The chastisement of our peace," or by which our peace was procured, "was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." God was reconciled when that was done, which made justice cease to demand our punishment.

The general ground on which we maintain the doctrine of atonement is, the necessity arising from the nature and the revealed will of God, that the transgressors of the law should be subjected to the penalty. We think that the transgressors can be allowed to escape only by a gracious dispensation, admitting a surety to suffer in their room. We cannot see how the honour of the Divine character and government could be otherwise maintained. Believing that avenging justice is essential to God, we conclude that free pardon, or pardon upon the simple condition of repentance, was impossible. But, although abstract reasoning from the Divine perfections may be auxiliary to our belief of any particular doctrine, the proper foundation of faith is the express testimony of Scripture; and I have therefore endeavoured to lay before you a part of the evidence which it supplies on this most important subject. The argument drawn from the justice of God in support of this doctrine, was considered when I endeavoured to illustrate his perfections.

I shall close this discussion, by calling your attention to the objections which are advanced against this doctrine.

First, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement is repugnant to all our notions of justice; for, what is more mani-

festly unjust, than that the innocent should suffer for the guilty ? But the assumed maxim, that it is contrary to justice that a person should suffer except for his own sins, is too sweeping, and is not agreeable to the common sentiments of mankind. It is acknowledged that, in certain cases, one man may put himself in the place of another, and bear the consequences of such substitution. We have an example in cases of suretiship, when the surety is compelled to do what the principal has failed to perform. There are even instances in the matter of life and death, of one man engaging to save the life of another by the sacrifice of his own. Here, however, suretiship is extended beyond its due limits, because no man has power to give away his own life, and therefore no government has a right to accept it. But the principle of substitution is recognized and acted upon among men, and cannot be consistently condemned, when adopted as a part of the Divine administration. We cannot reasonably find fault with God for doing what is done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is acknowledged by all to be fair and equitable. There are several considerations which show that, in the present case, it was perfectly justifiable. Christ possessed the necessary qualification of freedom from the obligation upon all other men to suffer death ; if he had had sins of his own, for which to make satisfaction, he could not have been admitted as a substitute. He was master of his own life as Lord of all, could make a free gift of it, had power to lay it down, and power to take it again. No man could take it from him ; he gave it freely, and the law says, *Volenti nulla fit injuria* ; he is not injured, when that is done to him, to which he has given his deliberate and cordial consent. God, who might have demanded the death of the guilty themselves, being the supreme Lawgiver, was pleased so far to relax the law, as to allow another to die for them. We see that all things concur to make this transaction accordant with justice. Christ might give his life for us ; he gave it freely, and his Father accepted it. God certainly knew what was proper to be done, what became his character, what would most effectually uphold the authority and honour of his government ; and what man or angel will presume to arraign the dispensation ? In truth, the proper question is, whether the Scriptures teach that

Christ was a propitiatory sacrifice; and, if they do, objections to the justice of the proceeding are vain and impious, because it is past all doubt, that whatever God does is right.

In the second place, it is objected, that this doctrine represents God as furious and revengeful, delighting in the miseries of his creatures, and contented only with torments and blood. He would not be appeased, and permit sinners to escape, till his Son offered the dreadful sacrifice of himself. This is an unfair, irreverent, and malignant representation of a holy and awful truth of revealed religion. The Scriptures do indeed ascribe wrath, jealousy, and revenge to God, by *anthropopathy*, or the figurative attribution of human sentiments and feelings, and even of human members, to him; but every person is aware, that the design of such forms of speech would be perverted, and great dishonour would be done to him, by supposing that there is any thing in his nature analogous to the commotions and infirmities of ours. Far be it from us to conceive so unworthily of Him who is all-perfect. Such terms are employed solely to assist us in forming an idea of the contrariety of sin to his nature and will, of the strong disapprobation with which he regards it, and of his fixed determination to render the recompense of their deeds to the transgressors of his law. He has no pleasure in the misery of his creatures, abstractly considered, as he has assured us with an oath; he is naturally good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. But, having given a righteous law to man, he will maintain its authority, by executing the penalty upon those who violate it: being the Ruler of the world, he will not permit the disobedient and rebellious to escape with impunity. When we affirm, that avenging justice is essential to God, we do not mean to represent him as cruel and unrelenting, but as one who must do what is right, and will abide by his original law, which denounced death upon transgressors. When we affirm, that he would not pardon sin without an atonement, we do not impute to him any want of mercy, but ascribe to him the perfection of justice, which required that compensation should be made for the wrong which he had sustained, and security should be given for the preservation of his rights and prerogatives.

In the third place, It is objected, that the doctrine of the atonement supposes God to be liable to change, to be first angry, and then pacified. But this objection might be made to every system of religion, which admits that sin is displeasing to God ; for the same change must take place, when a sinner repents. It might be made to prayer, the professed design of which is, to obtain blessings from him, which he would not otherwise have bestowed. The atonement did not make God hate sin less than he did before, or excite feelings of compassion towards us, which did not formerly exist. He loved us before he gave his Son ; and sin still is, and ever will be, the object of his utmost aversion. The effect of the atonement was a change of dispensation, which is consistent with immutability of nature. He could now extend mercy to those whom he was always willing to pardon, but could not pardon honourably, till his justice was satisfied. In fact, he demanded an atonement, because he does not change ; and, therefore, would not revoke his threatening, nor lay aside his abhorrence of sin. They represent him as mutable, who assert, that he pardons sin without satisfaction to his justice.

In the fourth place, It is objected, that this doctrine supposes a price to have been paid for our redemption, whereas it is represented in the Scriptures as free. This objection does not bear particularly upon the doctrine, as stated and maintained by us, but is applicable to the Scripture itself, which says, that we are bought with a price, and yet declares, that we are saved by grace. It is true that the blood of Christ was shed as the ransom of our souls ; but still, in respect of us, redemption is free, because nothing is given by us in exchange for it, and it is enjoyed by every man who receives it with humility and gratitude. It is farther evident, that our redemption is of grace, although the death of Christ was the indispensable condition of it, because it originated in the free purpose of God, who might have left us in a state of guilt and misery ; because, in this scheme, a surety was admitted instead of sinners themselves, whom the law had marked out as the objects of the penalty ; because the surety was chosen and appointed by God, on whose part all the advances were made ; and because the office of redeeming us was devolved upon a person so high in dignity, and so closely

related to God, that his mission will for ever remain a proof of unmerited and ineffable love. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."*

In the fifth place, It is objected, that to suppose Christ to have died for our sins, is to suppose him to have made an atonement to himself, because, if he is God, he was offended as well as his Father. The objection is founded on our imperfect knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity; and it is surely absurd to oppose to a truth clearly revealed, arguments drawn from a subject which surpasses our comprehension. Assuming the doctrine of the Trinity, we must pronounce it to be presumptuous to say that a thing was impossible, although Scripture has told us that it was done, solely because we cannot conceive how it was done. If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, the union and distinctions of whom we do not understand, shall we venture to say, that one of them could not act economically in the character of Supreme Lawgiver and Judge, and another, in a different nature assumed for the purpose, do what was necessary to display his justice, and prepare the way for the exercise of his mercy? There have been many instances of human legislators, who, in a private character, gave satisfaction to their own laws. That such cases can be considered as strictly analogous to the present, I will not say; it is certain, however, that in Scripture our Redeemer is represented, during his sufferings, not as the Lawgiver, but as the subject of law,—not as the equal of the Father, but as his servant. The difficulty of conceiving this arrangement, is not a reason why we should call in question the fact, that he was made under the law, and fulfilled it by his obedience and death.

In the sixth place, An objection is founded on the sufferings and death of believers; for how could they be subject to these evils, if he fully expiated their guilt? When a debt is paid by a surety, the debtor is completely and instantly released, because the surety was included, as well as the debtor, in the original obligation. But, in a case of punishment, where the offender alone was the object of the penalty, the admission of a substitute, being an act of grace, may be accompanied with

* 1 John iv. 10.

such conditions as the Lawgiver shall choose to prescribe. It was not, therefore, inconsistent with justice, that in the present case it should be stipulated, that sinners should be pardoned, not immediately after they had offended, but at some period during their lives ; and that, although from that moment they should be freed from the sentence of eternal death, they should remain under the original law of mortality. It was certainly in the power of the Supreme Legislator to determine, whether the whole penalty, or only a part of it, should be remitted. And the efficacy of the atonement appears from the removal of the principal part of the penalty, in comparison with which, the evil which is inflicted is as nothing, yea, less than nothing. Besides, that evil, in consequence of the atonement, has virtually the nature of a blessing, being corrective and not properly penal, subservient to the good of the soul, affording scope for the exercise of many virtues, and contributing to prepare the people of God for a happier and more perfect state. Death itself proves to be the gate of life.

With regard to the objection, that the doctrine of vicarious punishment is calculated to remove the restraint of salutary fear, and to encourage men to go on in sin that grace may abound, it is so stale, and so fully refuted by Scripture and experience, that I deem it unworthy of any farther notice.

LECTURE LIX.

ON THE PRIESTLY OFFICE OF CHRIST.

THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.—PLACE OF INTERCESSION.—ITS OBJECTS, THE ELECT.—MODE OF INTERCESSION, PRAYER.—THE SUBJECT OF IT.—ITS CAUSE OR REASON.—CHRIST THE ONLY INTERCESSOR.—THE POPIH DOCTRINE OF THE INTERCESSION OF SAINTS AND ANGELS, CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE AND REASON.

WE have proved that Jesus Christ is the Priest, as well as the Prophet of his Church, and that there were two important duties incumbent on him in this character, sacrifice and intercession. The first he performed upon earth, when he died upon the cross; for it has appeared that his death was a true and proper sacrifice offered to God, to appease his justice, and to obtain our eternal redemption. It was, in truth, THE SACRIFICE by way of eminence, all others being merely types of it, and having no efficacy in themselves to expiate guilt.

We now proceed to speak of his intercession, which signifies in general those acts of his priestly office, the object of which is to obtain the communication of the benefits of his sacrifice to men, for their pardon and final salvation. The proper place of his intercession is heaven, into which he entered not long after his resurrection, and where he will continue to minister till all the ends of his office are accomplished. But it is not confined to heaven, for we find him interceding in his state of humiliation. In this sense some understand that passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in

which it is said that "in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications to God, with strong crying and tears."* I doubt the propriety of this application of it, because the Apostle expressly declares, that he offered his supplication "to Him that was able to save him from death," representing them as supplications for himself, that he might be supported under his severe afflictions, and ultimately delivered from them. The intercession of Christ signifies his prayer for *us*. His prayer on the cross for his enemies has also been referred to his intercession, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."† Here, however, there is equal reason to doubt. If his intercession is prevalent, or if he always obtains what he asks in the character of our High Priest, it would follow that all the persons who were concerned in his death will be forgiven. But, although it is certain that many of them did afterwards repent, and acknowledge him to be the Son of God and the Redeemer of Israel, we are not warranted by Scripture to say, that mercy was extended to the whole multitude that demanded his crucifixion, to all the members of the Sanhedrim who pronounced him to be worthy of death, to Pilate who condemned him, to the Roman soldiers who executed the sentence, and to every individual who consented to the nefarious deed. We must, therefore, consider this prayer as expressive of the spirit of charity, which he has enjoined upon his followers, and of which his own conduct has afforded a perfect example. As a man he forgave his persecutors, and it was his desire that his Father would forgive them. His official prayers are founded on his knowledge of the purpose of God with respect to individuals; his private prayers on the law, which commands every man to desire the good of others, and to promote it by all lawful means in his power. But, while we leave out these cases, there remains enough to shew that Christ acted as an intercessor in his state of humiliation. As he was often engaged in prayer, and sometimes spent whole nights in it, there is no doubt that the subject of his supplications was not himself alone, but his disciples and his church in every age of the world. He told Peter that he had prayed for him that his faith might not fail; and on the

* Heb. v. 7.

† Luke xxiii. 34.

evening before his crucifixion, he presented a solemn address to his father for all his followers, which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."*

Although he had not yet died as a propitiation for sin, yet he commenced the work of intercession, because he was already invested with the priestly office, and the atonement would be soon made, from which all the efficacy of his prayers is derived. It was allowed him to anticipate the work of heaven, because it was certain that he would not fail to satisfy the demands of justice, and to pay the price of spiritual blessings.

The Scripture represents the intercession of Christ as consisting in his appearance for us in the heavenly sanctuary. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."† When he had risen from the dead, he ascended to the celestial temple, the seat of the glorious presence of God; and he entered in the character which he had sustained upon earth, namely, that of our Representative. After his resurrection he shewed himself to his disciples, with the wounds in his hands, and feet, and side, which his enemies had inflicted, and, as nothing is said which implies that they afterwards disappeared, it may be supposed that they remained when he returned to heaven. This may seem to be confirmed by one of the visions of John: "I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain;"‡ that is, bearing the marks of a violent death. Hence it has been conjectured, that he appears before God with the visible tokens of his sufferings in his body, as the Jewish high priest carried into the holy of holies a part of the blood of the animal sacrifices, in testimony that they had been slain. It is certain, however, that this exhibition is not necessary to remind his Father of his merits, nor is it for this purpose that it can be conceived to be made. Since it will be acknowledged not to be essential to the design of his ministrations in heaven, it may be questioned whether it be consistent with the present state of his body; and although it would be presumptuous to speak decidedly on a subject of

* John xvii. 20.

† Heb. ix. 24.

‡ Rev. v. 6.

which we know so little, it may be said with some appearance of truth, that it is not suitable to our conceptions of a glorified body, that it should retain any vestige of infirmity, any mark, however honourable from the manner in which it was acquired, which might in any degree impair its beauty. Laying aside, therefore, this notion, which is more fanciful than solid, we understand his "appearance for us in heaven" to signify, that he presents himself before God in the body which was crucified for our sins, and in the character of our High Priest, to plead his atonement as the ground on which the blessings of salvation should be communicated to men. It signifies, not the simple presentation of his human nature ; for although God manifests himself in a peculiar manner in the upper world, we are as really, though not as sensibly, present with him on earth as in heaven ; but an official presentation of it, or, in other words, a ministration by which the design of his office is accomplished. Jesus Christ has left this world, but he has not ceased to act as our High Priest. He retains his office, and performs its duties in his state of exaltation.

Before I proceed to point out more distinctly the nature of his intercession, it will be proper to inquire for whom he intercedes. We may say, then, that he intercedes for the elect, whether they are or are not in a state of grace. With regard to those who are not converted, he does not pray, that, continuing as they are, they should be saved, or that their state should be immediately changed, but that, at the appointed time, they should be brought to the knowledge of the truth : "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." * These words he spake upon earth, and we cannot doubt that he is still as mindful of those who have not yet entered into the fellowship of his Church. Although living in ignorance and sin, they are dear to him as persons for whom he shed his blood. He looks forward to their conversion as the reward of his sufferings ; and it is owing to his appearance in their behalf, that the Holy Spirit is sent "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of their sins, and inheri-

* John x. 16.

tance among them which are sanctified by faith." * Faith is the gift of God, and is bestowed upon those alone for whom our Saviour prays ; " for in him we are blessed with all spiritual blessings." † Enough has been said with respect to this class of the objects of his intercession.

The other class comprehends those who are in a state of grace, and of his prayers for them we shall afterwards speak. He does not pray for all men who are at present alive, or shall hereafter come into existence. His intercession is not more extensive than his sacrifice ; and he has told us, that, as " the good Shepherd, he has given his life for the sheep." ‡ He has pointed out its limits in the following words : " I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me ; for they are thine." " Neither pray I for these alone,"—the few disciples who had attached themselves to him during his public ministry,—" but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." || Under the Mosaic economy, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraven upon twelve precious stones in the breast-plate which the high priest wore when he appeared before God in the most holy place, and in this manner it was signified that he was the representative of the whole nation. The twelve tribes were typical of believers under the gospel, who are the spiritual Israel ; and Jesus Christ, their representative, bears them upon his heart in the heavenly sanctuary. He remembers them with the most tender affection, and manages their affairs with wisdom and fidelity. He did not shed his blood at random, as would have been the case if the sole design of his death had been to render God placable to sinners, and to pave the way for the salvation of those who should comply with the terms upon which it was offered. " The Lord knoweth them that are his," for they were given to him by his Father, and he has taken them under his protection. They live in distant ages ; they are scattered over the face of the earth ; they are placed in different circumstances ; and some of them are so obscure, such solitary and disregarded sojourners in the vale of tears, that their nearest neighbours know little of their character, and still less of their wants and sorrows. But he is as fully acquainted with the case of each individual as

* Acts xxvi. 18. † Eph. i. 3. ‡ John x. 11. || John xvii. 9, 20.

if he were the sole object of his care ; and hence, as he is a merciful, so he is a faithful High Priest, who does not neglect the interest of the poorest and meanest of his followers. He observes them all, who said to Nathanael, “ When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” *

In his intercession, Jesus Christ expresses his desire for the salvation of his people. We have seen that he appears for them in the presence of God ; but that something more is implied than the simple presentation of himself in our nature, we may infer from his own information : “ I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Comforter.” We know that, in reference to men, prayer is the offering up of their desires to God for the blessings which they need ; and we have no reason to think that, in the present case, the meaning is materially different.

Prayer is not inconsistent with the dignity of the human nature of our Saviour, as united to the second Person of the Trinity, and at present in a state of exaltation. In that nature he executed his offices during his residence upon earth, and in the same nature he continues to perform the duties of his priesthood. It is now glorified ; but it is essentially the same as it was in its state of humiliation. It then was, and it still is, a creature, and consequently is dependent upon God, and cannot therefore be dishonoured or degraded by an act which flows from that dependence, or belongs to any office with which it is invested. We have seen that it was not deified when it became the nature of him who is God ; and although, being now above all want, the man Christ Jesus does not stand in need of prayers for himself, as related to men, who are encompassed with sins and infirmities and have no resources in themselves, he may be conceived to pray for them without any diminution of his dignity. What, indeed, can be more honourable to him than to interpose between God and the human race, and to obtain, by his requests, the supplies of the Holy Spirit, by which thousands and millions are sanctified and comforted ?

Prayer among men signifies not only mental desire, but also the use of words in which the desire is expressed. Whether it has the same meaning when it is ascribed to our In-

* John i. 48.

tercessor in heaven, we are unable to determine. We are certain that, even upon earth, words are not necessary to inform God of our desires, although, in respect of ourselves and others, they serve a variety of valuable purposes. It is possible, therefore, that they are not employed in the intercession of Christ, and that it is represented as consisting in praying to the Father, solely in accommodation to our ideas and usages, while nothing more is meant than that he desires the salvation of his people, and his desire is known to his Father. But we do not venture to deliver a positive opinion upon a point so obscure, and the determination of which would contribute nothing to our edification.

But, although the prayer of Christ, in his present state, is materially the same with that of men, we must separate from our notion of his intercession every adjunct which arises from human infirmity, and conceive of it as different from the prayers which he offered up upon earth, "with strong crying and tears." * At the same time, we must beware of going to the opposite extreme, as some Divines have done, who talk of his intercession as authoritative. They do not mean that his prayers are commands, peremptory orders that what he asks should be done, but that he speaks as one who has a right to be heard. Yet, although it be true that he has a title to receive the blessings of salvation for his people, because he purchased them with his blood, it would be altogether improper to suppose, that the knowledge of this right gives such a tone to his prayers as would change them into simple volitions. This would be improper, because they are the prayers of one who, whatever is his present dignity, and how great soever is his merit, still sustains the character of a minister or servant, and because it would destroy the nature of intercession, by substituting for desire an intimation of will. To intercede, is to ask something from another. Now, although our Redeemer does not ask like us, who ought to be humble from a consciousness of unworthiness, yet he undoubtedly continues to feel, and to express, the same reverence for the majesty and authority of his Father, by which he was distinguished upon earth. The passage upon which this view of his intercession is founded, gives countenance to

* Heb. v. 7.

it only as it appears in translations, and particularly in our own: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." * Some critics have supposed that the word *θελω*, *I will*, is expressive of authority. It is acknowledged that it does sometimes convey this idea; but it is only from the circumstances in which it is used that this sense can be inferred; because, in other cases, and, I may add, most frequently, it merely imports simple volition, or desire. When our Lord said to the Syrophenician woman, *γεννηθῆτω σοι σὺς θελεῖς*, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt," † *θελω* can admit the sense only of *desiring* or *wishing*. The meaning is evidently the same, when he said to the two sons of Zebedee, *τι θελετε ποιησω ὑμῖν*; "What would ye that I should do for you?" ‡ It would be easy to make a large collection of examples. The common interpretation of the word, therefore, should be retained, unless there be a good reason for deviating from it; and in the present case there is none, except the mistaken idea that, by introducing the notion of authority, we shall add dignity to the intercession of Christ, and more clearly discriminate between his prayers and those of sinful men. But critics and commentators should beware of forming doctrines, however plausible, and even although true, from passages and words in which they are not contained. They have committed this error, I apprehend, in the case before us. They have affixed an arbitrary sense to the verb *θελω*, and, in doing so, have missed their own end; for, in attempting to give a more exalted idea of the intercession of Christ, they have destroyed its nature, as was formerly observed, by representing it, not as prayer, which he himself calls it, but as an authoritative volition. The proper translation of the word is not *volo*, but *velim*, in Latin; and in English, not *I will*, but *I would*; that is, 'I desire that those whom thou hast given me may be with me.'

I shall now point out, in some particulars, the subject of his intercession.

First, He prays that his disciples may be preserved in a state of grace: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." "I pray not that thou

* John xvii. 24.

† Matth. xv. 28.

‡ Mark x. 36.

shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." * The blessing for which he prays is protection, not from the violence of men, but from the evil of sin, or the evil one, "who, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." One great design of his intercession is, to prevent his followers from being overcome by temptation, from yielding to the terrors and allurements by which their constancy is tried, and to cherish the principle of grace in their souls, exposed as it is to the operation of causes which are hostile to its growth, and threaten its very existence. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." † We learn from the example of Peter, to what length a believer would go, if he were left to himself. In the moment of peril, he denied his Lord; and, adding profaneness to treachery, he denied him with oaths and imprecations. What restrained him from a total renunciation of his connexion with Christ, and from becoming a final apostate, like Judas? It was the prayer of our Intercessor which upheld his wavering faith, as his arm had once saved him from sinking in the water, and rekindled the dying flame of love in his breast. It is a consoling truth, that believers cannot fall from a state of grace; but their stability is not owing to their own wisdom, and vigilance, and activity. "Because I live," says their Redeemer, "ye shall live also." ‡ By seasonable, but imperceptible communications of grace, the tendency of their hearts to evil is checked before it has carried them beyond a state of salvation; their holy dispositions, however faint and languid they may become, are preserved from expiring; and they live on, amidst fears, and dangers, and failures, till the feeble germ of life burst forth into immortal vigour and luxuriance.

Secondly, He prays that their persons and services may be accepted. When they first believed, they were received into the favour of God; but they could not long retain themselves in this happy state. Every day they commit sin; which implies the same moral turpitude, and the same guilt, in the case of a believer as of an unbeliever. Every day, therefore, the fellowship between God and them would be broken, if

* John xvii. 11, 15.

† Luke xxii. 31.

‡ John xiv. 19.

Christ did not continue to officiate in their name, and obtain, by his intercession, the pardon of their transgressions. His appearance before the throne of God secures, that, although they may incur the displeasure and chastisement of their heavenly Father, they shall not fall under his curse; that, although the comfortable sense of his love may be suspended, it shall not be utterly taken from them. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* Their duties are holy, being performed under the influence of the Spirit of grace; but they are imperfect. There is often a mixture of improper motives. There is a want of intenseness of feeling and affection. The mind wanders in devotional exercises; and love is, in some degree, divided between God and the world. But the law requires absolute perfection, and its demands are not abated in consequence of the mediation of Christ. Hence, if the best duties of the saints were weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, they would be found not to be of standard weight. If God should act according to justice,—and this is his rule of procedure towards those who presume to approach to him in their own name,—they would be rejected. But this consequence, which would be fatal to the hopes of believers, is prevented by the interposition of our Saviour, who intercedes for their acceptance on the ground of his own merits. What is good in their works, God approves, because it is the effect of his own grace. What is evil he forgives, in consideration of the atonement which He offered for them, who now ministers continually before him. We are commanded "to offer to God the sacrifice of praise," and all our sacrifices, "by him;"† because they will be pleasing to God only when presented by his Son, who can so powerfully recommend them. The object of his intercession is, that the Holy Spirit may be given, to enable believers to walk in the path of obedience, and so to assist their humble endeavours to serve God that they shall find favour in his sight. We are "accepted in the Beloved." "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed."‡ It has been supposed, with much probability, that the following passage is a figurative

* 1 John ii. 1. † Heb. xiii. 15. ‡ Eph. i. 6. Ps. lxxxiv. 8, 9.

description of this part of his intercession, and that he is the angel who is represented as ministering at the altar: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." *

In the third place, He answers the charges which are brought against his disciples. Satan is called "the accuser of the brethren," and is said "to accuse them before God day and night." † These are not words without meaning. We cannot give a distinct account of his proceedings; but it is evident that he does advance charges against the people of God, some of which are false, and require no refutation, as was the charge of hypocrisy against Job; but some also are true, being founded upon the sins which they have actually committed. If their consciences at the same time bear testimony against them, their minds must be in great distress, and they will feel the necessity of an Advocate to plead their cause, and to prevent the sentence of condemnation from being pronounced, which they so justly deserve. Such an Advocate is Jesus Christ, who replies to every accusation, and assigns valid reasons why his clients should be acquitted. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." ‡ When Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua, the high priest, to resist him, "The Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" And the Angel said, the Angel of the covenant, who is here called *JEHOVAH*, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." ||

Lastly, He prays for the eternal happiness of his followers in heaven. "I will that they also whom thou hast

* Rev. viii. 3, 4. † Ib. xii. 10. ‡ Rom. viii. 33, 34. || Zech. iii. 2, 4.

given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." * Our faithful High Priest will not desist from his work till it be finished. As he died, so he lives for his followers, and will continue to intercede for them till they come to the perfect enjoyment of salvation. Having gone into heaven, he will draw them to himself. Every man will follow in his order; and the mansions which he has prepared for them, will be filled with a glorious and happy company, redeemed with his blood, "out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." When the righteous die, we lament the loss which the Church has sustained by the removal of persons whose wisdom and virtues edified and adorned it, and we regret that they have not been permitted to remain longer upon earth. When our pious friends are taken from us, we are apt to give way to the violence of our feelings, and to mourn as if a sad calamity had befallen them. But should we not consider, that the event which we deplore is to them unspeakable gain, the end of their faith, and the completion of their hope? They have gone to behold him whom they love, and to rejoice for ever in his presence. Should we not remember that, in this case, the prayers of Christ have prevailed over our wishes and entreaties? For why have they died at this time? Has death come by chance, or by the blind operation of natural causes? Have they fallen without special appointment? Had heaven no concern in what has taken place upon earth? If not a sparrow perishes without the knowledge of God, still less can it be supposed that a good man leaves the world without his call. His death is the answer of the Father to the prayer of his Son. It is the means of introducing into the presence of the Saviour, and into the embraces of his love, his dear disciples, for whom he shed his precious blood. He desires that they should be with him, and this messenger is sent to conduct them to their home. This is the reason that our tears, and sighs, and fervent supplications, were of no avail; for how could they succeed in opposition to the prayer of the all-powerful Intercessor! This is a pleasing view of the death of believers. It shews us that it is indeed a blessing to them; and, as it is calculated to moderate our sorrow, so it should make us pray

* John xvii. 24.

for their life, with entire resignation to the will of the Head of the Church.

There is a passage which, at first sight, may seem to contradict what has been said concerning the intercession of Christ in the heavenly state: "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you."* But, as in other passages he expressly affirms that he would pray for them, we must attempt to reconcile them with that now quoted; and the task is not difficult. His intention in the words before us was, not to deny that he would intercede for his followers, but to guard them against mistaking the design of his intercession, and thinking that there is some reluctance on the part of his Father to bestow blessings upon them, which his prayers were necessary to overcome. Accordingly, he adds—"For the Father himself loveth you; because ye have loved me, and believed that I came out from God."† He would have us know, and remember, that the love of the Father is the source of all spiritual blessings, and that his intercession is necessary only as the channel in which they are conveyed.

The Scripture speaks of the intercession of the Holy Ghost; but we must beware of conceiving of it as if it were of the same nature with the intercession of Christ. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered."‡ The Holy Ghost is not a mediator between us and God, for there is only one, the man Christ Jesus. He intercedes for believers not personally, but by his influences; not without them, but within them. Their prayers are not presented by him to the Father; but he enables them to intercede for themselves, by teaching them what they should pray for, and by exciting them to pray with importunity, and in the exercise of faith.

The intercession of Christ was typified by the entrance of the Jewish high priest into the most holy place, where he sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices, and burnt incense before the mercy-seat. It is not, however, enough to say that such was the procedure under the legal economy, when we are

* John xvi. 26.

† Ib. 27.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

inquiring into the reason of the intercession of our Saviour. It is certain that a type and a prophecy must be fulfilled ; but neither the one nor the other is the cause of the event to which it relates. An event does not take place because it was prefigured or foretold ; but the type was instituted and the prediction was delivered, because the event was predetermined. Jesus Christ does not intercede because the high priest of the law went into the holy of holies, after he had offered the anniversary atonement ; but the high priest was appointed to appear before the propitiatory, to represent the ascension of our Redeemer, and his ministry in heaven.

The true reason of his intercession appears from some things which have been already said. The imperfection of the services of the saints requires that he should recommend them to God, because in themselves, even although they proceed from a principle of grace, they would not bear a strict examination, and according to the rules of justice would be rejected. There could be no acceptable religion without the intercession of Christ. His sacrifice upon the cross laid the foundation of religion ; but it could not be maintained if he did not continue to mediate, and by the presentation of himself and his merits, to secure the covenant of peace from being broken. The dispensation of grace must be so conducted in every part of it, that the holiness of God shall shine with unclouded splendour. With this view he avoids immediate commerce with men, in the best of whom there are remains of sin. Between himself and them, he has placed our Redeemer, by whom all his perfections have been glorified, that, bestowing every favour upon men, and accepting their services solely for his sake, he may appear in the communications of his grace to be the Holy One, who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon evil." Contemplating an awful Being who has published a law which demands perfection, and denounced punishment against every violation of it, the most eminent saints would be alarmed, and say, We cannot serve him. But the interposition of a person nearly related to them, who is a partaker of their nature, and has a feeling of their infirmities, authorises their humble confidence, and revives their expiring hopes. Conscious of defects in their best services, they yet venture to

engage in them, because by him they are presented with acceptance to the Father. His intercession is necessary for the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people; and this is the reason that it constitutes an essential part of his priestly office. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." *

It is acknowledged by Christians of all denominations, if Unitarians are excepted, whose claim to the Christian name we do not admit, that our exalted Redeemer intercedes for us in the heavenly sanctuary; but by a large class of them, a doctrine is maintained which entrenches upon this part of his sacerdotal office. You will perceive that I refer to the church of Rome, which teaches that there are other intercessors with God, namely, angels and glorified saints. The council of Trent "commands all bishops and others, who are employed in instructing the people, to teach the faithful, according to the practice of the Catholic and Apostolic Church from the earliest times, the consent of the Fathers, and the decrees of Holy Councils, that the saints reigning with Christ offer prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful to invoke them, and to betake ourselves to their prayers and assistance in order to obtain blessings from God through his Son; that those who deny that the saints enjoying eternal felicity in heaven ought to be invoked, or who assert either that they do not pray for men, or that the invocation of them is idolatry, and is contrary to the word of God, and injurious to the honour of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and man, hold an impious opinion." † To prove that to employ the saints as intercessors, is not derogatory to the honour of Christ, or inconsistent with the acknowledgment that he is the only Mediator, a distinction has been coined, of which there is not a vestige in the Scriptures, between a Mediator of redemption and a Mediator of intercession. The former character belongs exclusively to him; the latter is shared by the saints. The books of devotion in the Church of Rome, are full, not only of prayers to God that, for the merits and

* Heb. vii. 25, 26. † Concil. Trident. Decreta, Sess. xxv. *de invocatione*, &c.

prayers of the saints, he would save the worshippers from guilt and eternal damnation, but also of prayers to them, that they would pray to God in behalf of those who call upon them. How often is the blessed Virgin in particular thus addressed, "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.*" "*Sancta Dei genetrix, ora pro nobis.*" "*Virgo virginum, ora pro nobis.*" Similar prayers are offered up to all the Apostles, and to all the saints in the calendar, and likewise to the Angels who are also advanced to the dignity of Mediators. "*Sancte Michael, ora pro nobis.*" "*Sancte Gabriel, ora pro nobis.*" "*Omnes sancti angeli et archangeli, orate pro nobis.*"

In the primitive times, those who had died for religion were held in great veneration. Their names were mentioned with honour; the day of their martyrdom, which was called their birth-day, because they then entered into glory, was celebrated, and the Christians assembled at their tombs to offer up prayers to God, and to excite themselves to faith and patience by the solemn recollection of their virtues. But they did not worship the saints, nor for the first three centuries was any mediator acknowledged but Jesus Christ alone. In process of time, however, men began to give high titles to the departed saints, and to address them, at first, it may be, after the manner of an orator apostrophising those who are absent; but those addresses grew into prayers, the object of which was to obtain their good offices in heaven, where their interest was supposed to be great. "Those who are well," says Theodorit, "ask the preservation of their health, and those who are struggling with any disease, deliverance from their sufferings; the childless ask children, and such as are sent upon a journey entreat the saints to be their companions and their guides on the way; not approaching to them as gods, but supplicating them as divine men, and beseeching them to be intercessors for them." Thus the foundation was laid, upon which an immense fabric of idolatry was reared by the Church of Rome, where the worship of Saints is established by law. These are such persons as the pope has canonized, or declared by a solemn act to be proper objects of worship. Some of them were unquestionably good men, although unworthy of this honour, which is due only to God and his Son; but others are doubtful characters, or ruffians and impostors, whose names

should not be mentioned but in terms of execration, or imaginary beings who never existed but in fabulous legends.

Protestants have with good reason rejected the notion of angelical and human intercessors. There is not one word in the Scriptures to favour it, or rather it is expressly condemned by them. The worship of angels is one of the corruptions against which Paul warns us, in the Epistle to the Colossians ; and still less surely is religious honour to be given to the saints, who are of an inferior nature. The pretended practice of the church from the earliest ages, (I call it pretended, because the practice was unknown in the primitive times,) the consent of fathers and the decrees of councils, are lighter than vanity in the estimation of those who consider human authority as of no value in matters of religion, and weigh all doctrines in the balance of the sanctuary. "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

It is unnecessary to add any other argument against this doctrine, besides the want of scriptural authority ; but we may observe, that the intercession of the saints presupposes that they hear our prayers, and are acquainted with our circumstances. But this is a gratuitous assumption. How can Papists prove that the saints in heaven know what is passing upon earth ? To us it should seem, that being creatures limited in their powers, and confined to a particular place, they cannot, in a world so distant from ours, see what is done and hear what is spoken by men. The doctrine under consideration imports that they are omnipresent or omniscient ; for how could the blessed virgin, for example, otherwise have any knowledge of the prayers, which are addressed to her at the same time in ten thousand places, and it may be by millions of individuals ? To say that the saints see all things in God, must mean, if it have any meaning, that they are endowed with the gift of omniscience, or at least that God reveals to them what he knows, that is, when men pray to the saints, God informs them that they are praying, and what are their desires, and thus qualifies them to be their intercessors. But where is the proof ? For all this we have no evidence, except the authority of the infallible church, the mother of lies and all abominations.

It has been said, that it is as lawful to ask the saints in heaven, as the saints upon earth, to pray for us. Between the two cases, however, there is this difference, that we have a command in the one case but none in the other; that the saints on earth hear us, while we have reason to think that those in heaven do not; that we do not pray to the saints upon earth, but merely request them; and that we do not consider them as intercessors in the sense of the Roman Church, but simply as friends who will join with us in supplication to him who is the hearer of prayer. We use no such form as the following, but look upon it as in the highest degree impious, although it is found among the prayers of the Antichristian Church: "Let the intercession of such a person, we beseech thee, O Lord, recommend us, that what we cannot obtain by our own merits, we may procure by his patronage."

I would ask the abettors of this idolatrous worship, why should the saints intercede for us? Is it because Jesus Christ has not interest enough with his Father, to obtain for us the blessings which we need? This I presume they will not dare to affirm, in the face of the express declaration, that he is able by his intercession to save us to the uttermost? Is it because he is so great, that we may not venture upon an immediate approach to him? This notion is contrary to his own invitation to come to him, which is accompanied with a promise of rest to our souls. Is it because the saints are more nearly allied to us, being men like ourselves? The supposition is false, because our High Priest is also a man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and has had full experience of our infirmities. Is it because the saints are more disposed to sympathise with us? Here also they err to their own ruin, and the dishonour of our Redeemer, who as much excels all angels and all men in love and pity as in dignity. "We have not an High Priest, who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are."* Upon him alone, therefore, we will depend, and say in opposition both to Popish and to Pagan idolatry, which are indeed substantially the same, with only a change of names, "Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is

* Heb. iv. 15.

one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him ; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." * And if some men will still put their trust in beings, great in power, it is acknowledged, and elevated to the highest honours, but less than nothing when compared with Him upon whom we rely, we will add, " Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." †

* 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

† Deut. xxxii. 31.

LECTURE LX.

CHRIST'S STATE OF HUMILIATION.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CONDESCENSION AND HUMILIATION OF CHRIST.—CIRCUMSTANCES OF HUMILIATION; IN HIS BIRTH, HIS SUBJECTION TO THE LAW, THE EVENTS OF HIS LIFE, HIS DEATH, AND HIS BURIAL.—OPINIONS RESPECTING HIS "DESCENT INTO HELL."

THERE are two states in which our Redeemer may be viewed, very different in themselves, but both necessary to the execution of his offices. The one exhibits him humbled and abased; the other exhibits him exalted and glorified.

The first was not expected by the Jews, for reasons well known, and formerly mentioned. Their notions were natural to men, who, disregarding the Scriptures, or attending to those parts of them alone which were congenial to their feelings and inclinations, permitted imagination to fill up the general outline of the character of the Messiah, as the deliverer of the people of God. What, indeed, should any man have expected when he first heard of the descent of the Son of God to the earth, but that he would appear in circumstances corresponding to his native dignity, and be revealed to mortal eyes by the rays of his Godhead, giving splendour to the veil of humanity which attempered his glory to our weakness? Might it not have been expected that his advent would be signalised by signs in heaven, and signs on earth; that the celestial spirits would wait upon him in a visible form; that princes and kings would lay their crowns and sceptres at his feet;

that all the tribes of mankind, and in particular the nation of the Jews, would welcome him with shouts of joy and triumph; and that now, if upon any occasion, the words of prophecy would receive a literal fulfilment, and seas, and mountains, and forests, would break out into a universal chorus of praise? "But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts." Our Saviour did not come unnoticed to all the world, but few were apprised of the arrival of the illustrious visitant. A great part of his life was spent in privacy and obscurity; when he came forward upon the public stage, he had to encounter the contempt and ridicule of the majority of his countrymen, and his short career terminated in ignominy and blood. All this, although foretold by the prophets, had been overlooked by the Jews, and hence the bitter disappointment which they felt, and the scorn with which they rejected his claims: "How can this man save us!"

The design of this Lecture, is to trace the several steps of his humiliation.

A distinction has been made between the condescension and the humiliation of Christ; the former consisting in the assumption of our nature, and the latter in his subsequent abasement and sufferings. The reason why the assumption of our nature is not accounted a part of his humiliation, is, that he retains it in his state of exaltation. The distinction seems to be favoured by Paul, who represents him as first "being made in the likeness of men," and then "when he was found in fashion as a man, humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death of the cross."* Perhaps this is a more accurate view of the subject; but it has not been always attended to by Theological writers, some of whom have considered the incarnation as a part of his humiliation. As we have already spoken of the incarnation, it is not necessary to settle the propriety of introducing it at present.

Jesus Christ did not bring his assumed nature from heaven, as some have dreamed, affirming that the Virgin was merely the conduit or channel through which it passed; nor was it formed like the body of Adam, out of the dust of the ground. It was, indeed, miraculously conceived; but it was composed, like the body of every human being, of the substance of his

* Phil. ii. 7, 8.

mother. He was literally "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Had his nature not been derived from the same stock with ours, but only resembled it, there would not have been such a relation between us as should have rendered his mediation available for our good. If it was necessary that the precepts of the law, which we had violated, should be fulfilled, and its penalty should be executed, the Surety must be one of ourselves, that his obedience and sufferings might be so far accounted ours, as to be imputed to us for our justification. Now, there was only one way in which he could be a partaker of our nature, namely, by being conceived and born of a woman; and surely it was the first step of his humiliation, that he submitted to a process, by which, although all things were created by him, he was placed upon a level with his own creatures. He thus became a child, which, although it possesses all the elements of our nature, is considered as an imperfect being, because its faculties are in a dormant state; and, although destined afterwards to display the powers of intellect, it differs only in shape from the young of the irrational tribes. As we have no reason to suppose that, at this period, there was any other distinction between him and other infants, except his exemption from the taint of original sin, we may say that, when he was born, he knew not into what place he had come, was capable only of those sensations which every living being must feel as soon as it comes into contact with external objects, without being able to reflect upon them, and was helpless, and entirely dependent upon others. Let us remember, that we are describing the state of him who is now "King of kings," and "Lord of lords," and was then "God over all blessed for ever." The Apostle Paul, when speaking of this subject, makes use of a very strong expression, *ἐαυτὸν ἐκενώσε*, which our translators have rendered with a licence in which they have rarely indulged: "He made himself of no reputation;" while they ought to have said, "He emptied himself."* It is evident that Paul does not mean that he divested himself of his glory literally, but only economically; that is, he as effectually concealed it as if he had laid it entirely aside. No trace of Divine perfections could be

* Phil. ii. 7.

seen in a new born child. He who is greater than all, appeared in the lowest stage of human existence.

In addition to the circumstance of his birth, let us attend to the meanness of his condition. Judging according to our ideas of fitness, we might have expected that he would be the Son of a mighty princess; that the place of his birth would be a magnificent palace; and that the king and the nobles of Judea would be assembled to receive, with every demonstration of reverence and joy, this wonderful child, whose career would be so glorious, and whose future empire would extend over heaven and earth. But this expectation was not realised in a single particular. There were, indeed, some circumstances which shed a transient splendour on his birth, as the appearance of angels, who announced it to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, and the visit of the eastern Magi, who, conducted by a miraculous star, came to adore him, and to present their gifts. God would not permit his Son to come into the world altogether unnoticed; and, in his deepest abasement, he bore testimony to him whom men despised, by signs and wonders. But, in every other respect, nothing could be more lowly than his entrance upon this earthly scene. His mother, indeed, was a descendant from the family which once swayed the sceptre in Jerusalem; but this was only a nominal honour, which did not protect her and her offspring from the contempt with which poverty is regarded by the world. It is an empty homage which is paid to the children of kings, who, for ages, have ceased to reign; and the honours of blood are forgotten when all their former glory is obscured by the meanness of their present condition. Mary was a woman in the most humble rank of society; and her husband was a mechanic, who earned his bread by the labour of his hands. The most illustrious female, it is true, was unworthy to be the mother of the Son of God, and her station would have reflected no dignity upon him; but we must judge, at present, by a human standard, and, in this view, he humbled himself, when he stooped to be born of the wife of a carpenter.

Conformable to the lowly station of his mother, was the place where he first drew the breath of life. He was born in Bethlehem, that prophecy might be fulfilled; but Bethlehem was not the chief city of the kingdom. It was little among

the thousands of Judah, celebrated, indeed, as the city of David, but a small town at some distance from the capital. In Bethlehem, although the city of David, his illustrious Son did not meet with an honourable reception. When Joseph and Mary arrived there, it was so crowded with strangers, who had assembled, in obedience to the decree of the Emperor, to be enrolled, that there was no room for them in the inn. They, therefore, took up their residence in a stable; and there was he brought forth who was to rule over the house of Jacob for ever. In this obscure manner did he make his appearance upon earth. No person knew who he was but his parents, and a few shepherds who had received information from a heavenly messenger. Others, who might accidentally hear of the event, would consider him as the lowest of the low, on account of the humble circumstances of his parents, and the unusual place of his nativity. Who would have thought of searching for the Redeemer of Israel, and the Son of the Most High, in an out-house appropriated to the use of cattle? Who would have supposed, if he had by chance seen an infant lying in a manger, and attended by two unknown individuals, that this was he of whose advent and glory prophets had spoken in strains of enraptured eloquence? Who could have recognised, in this unpromising form, the Saviour of the human race, the future Judge of angels and men?

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.”* Attend to the important fact, that he was made under the law, for it was an eminent part of his humiliation, and, at the same time, accounts for the other particulars in which it consisted. You will perhaps ask, how he could be humbled by subjection to the law, since this is the necessary condition of all men, and all angels; and it is the glory as well as the happiness of a creature, to obey his Creator? It is not enough to say, that his humiliation appears from the consideration, that he of whom we speak was more than a creature, and, in his Divine person, was above the law; for, although his subjection to it was the act of his person, as were all his mediatorial acts, yet it was only as a man that he was or could be under its authority.

* Gal. iv. 4.

Let it be observed, that when Christ is said to be under the law, we do not consider it simply as the standard of duty, but as possessing that form which it acquired when God converted it into a covenant with men. He was made under the law, in all the obligations which it imposed upon us, both in requiring obedience to its precepts as the condition of life, and denouncing its penalty as the recompense of our transgressions. The law regarded him as the representative of sinners, and demanded the unabated fulfilment of its terms. It was enjoined upon him, who, in consequence of his relation to the second Person of the Trinity, had a title to the highest honour and felicity, and might have ascended to reign in heaven as soon as he was born upon earth, to go through a course of obedience amidst toil and sorrow, in order to obtain eternal glory for himself, as well as eternal life for his followers. Notwithstanding his unspotted purity, he was treated by the law as if he had been a sinner. It arraigned him before its tribunal, and condemned him to bear the punishment which it had pronounced upon the guilty. By being made under the law, he was made under the curse. The curse is the sentence by which the transgressor is doomed to suffer; and he was subjected to it, by becoming our Surety. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."* A more humiliating situation cannot be conceived. The Son of God is confounded with the meanest and vilest of mankind. The law made no concession to his dignity; it waived none of its rights in his favour. It spoke to him with the same high tone of authority in which it addresses a mere mortal; it was equally strict and unrelenting in its demands; nothing less would satisfy it than his blood, as a compensation for the wrongs which it had sustained from those whom he had undertaken to befriend.

The subjection of our Saviour to the law, accounts for all the other parts of his humiliation. As it would not have been fitting, that he who stood in the room of sinners, should have spent his days in ease and splendour, so his degradation and sorrows were necessary to fulfil the demands of the law. The Deliverer of mankind must submit to the labour, and suffering, and death to which they were doomed, because it was

* Gal. iii. 13.

not by an exertion of physical strength that his design could be accomplished, but by such moral acts as should uphold the authority and honour of the law, although those who had transgressed it were forgiven. You perceive, then, that the humiliation of Christ was not the consequence of an arbitrary appointment. It was an essential part of a great plan, originating in the wisdom and justice of God, for the manifestation of the glory of his attributes in the redemption of the world. "Although he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."*

We know little about our Saviour in the early part of his life, till, at twelve years of age, he appeared in the temple, and astonished the doctors by his wisdom; except that, for the preservation of his life from the murderous designs of Herod, he was carried by his parents into Egypt, and brought back to Galilee when the danger was past. Many stories, indeed, are to be found in an ancient composition, called the Gospel of the Infancy; but they rest entirely upon the authority of the anonymous author, and are too silly and absurd to deserve a moment's attention. While a child, he was dependent, like other children, upon others; and, although there is no doubt that the blessed Virgin treated him with the most tender affection, it was impossible that he should not have suffered through the inattention, and neglect, and awkwardness of those to whose care he was occasionally committed. Living among imperfect mortals, he must have experienced the effect of their ignorance and irregular tempers, especially while his mental faculties, not being sufficiently matured, nor his bodily strength confirmed, he was not yet qualified to manage himself. His food might be withheld, when his appetite craved it; his rest might be disturbed by unseasonable intrusions; his mind might be vexed by the peevishness and frowardness of those with whom he associated. These things are only matters of conjecture; but they are by no means improbable, as he was placed in circumstances exactly similar to those in which we find ourselves. It may be thought, indeed, that as the Son of God he would always command profound reverence, and uninterrupted attention to his comfort; but amidst the familiarity of daily intercourse, even his

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

parents might sometimes think of him only as a child ; and to his fellow-creatures and neighbours, perhaps, his dignity was unknown. Of this there can be no doubt, that it was humiliating to such a person, to be found in a situation in which he was indebted to others for the necessities of life, and for instruction and protection, and was exposed to the rudeness of the young, and the caprice of the old. When he grew up, it is probable that he was engaged in the same occupation with Joseph, his reputed father, whose circumstances might render it necessary that Jesus should contribute his labour for the maintenance of the family. Thus the Lord of all was reduced to a level with the lowest of the human race, and literally underwent that part of the curse, which doomed man “ to eat bread in the sweat of his face.” He is called not only *ὁ τοῦ τεκτοῦρος υἱός*,* *the carpenter’s son*, but *ὁ τεκτων*,† *the carpenter*. The word is equivalent to the Latin term *faber*, which signifies a workman, the nature of whose employment is specified by the adjectives, *ferrarius*, *æarius*, *lignæus*, denoting respectively *a blacksmith*, *a brazier or copper-smith*, *a carpenter or worker in wood*. The last is the occupation in which our Saviour is commonly supposed to have been engaged.‡

Of his public life, there is a more ample detail in the Gospels, from the narrative in which it appears, that he was “ a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” We have no reason to think that he was subject to disease. We never read that he was sick, or that he suffered any of those pains which are inflicted upon us, by alterations in the state of our bodies. As he was perfectly holy, there were no seeds of decay and dissolution in his frame. But he experienced all the other sinless infirmities of our nature. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary ; he felt the inconvenience of excessive cold and heat ; and, as he was endowed with the common passions and feelings of human nature, he was not a stranger to disappointment, and vexation, and sorrow, and the pangs of unrequited kindness and violated friendship.

To those evils were added the hardships of poverty. He became literally poor, when he assumed our nature ; and, in

* Matt. xiii. 55.

† Mark vi. 3.

‡ Justin Mart. Dial. cum Trypho.

doing so, he humbled himself, because he was originally rich. The Possessor of heaven and earth had not where to lay his head; he could not call the lowliest cottage in Judea his own. Women ministered to him; he was often indebted for his daily bread to the hospitality of others; and, when the tribute for the use of the temple was demanded from him, he found it necessary to work a miracle, to obtain the small sum of a *stater*, equal in value to half-a-crown, for himself and Peter.

During his public ministry, if he was admired and followed by some, he was hated and persecuted by others. The indignation of the proud rulers, and worldly-minded Pharisees, was caused by the loftiness of his pretensions, and the lowliness of his condition. His doctrine gave them particular offence, because it was levelled against their corruptions of religion, and exposed to public view their base dispositions, and the crimes in which they secretly indulged. Their rage and malice were vented in terms of obloquy, and every opprobrious name was applied to him, to stain his reputation, and render him odious in the eyes of the people. He was called a glutton, and a drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, and an emissary of Satan, who, in concert with that spirit, and aided by his power, was carrying on a nefarious design of blasphemy and wickedness. To these efforts of malignity he was not insensible, notwithstanding his consciousness of perfect innocence. Hence he expresses his feelings in the following affecting language: "Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there were none; and for comforters, but I found none."*

Men of flesh and blood were not the only enemies with whom he had to contend. The hostility of the old serpent was awakened by the appearance of the seed of the woman, against whom he directed his malicious, but ineffectual efforts. Immediately after his baptism, he was carried into the wilderness by the devil, where, for forty days, he was exposed to his temptations, and overcame them; not, however, we may be certain, without enduring much mental uneasiness, arising from the importunate and impudent solicitations of his adversary, and from the abhorrence which his impious suggestions

* Ps. lxxix. 20.

excited. No subsequent opportunity of harassing him would be neglected by the vigilant and unwearied malignity of the alarmed and enraged spirit, whose kingdom he had come to overthrow. Of his final assault upon him in the close of his life, we have a hint, and only a hint, so that we cannot explain in what manner it was conducted, nor tell what trouble it caused to his illustrious opponent: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." * And again, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." † This, however, we know, that, by his immediate temptations, and by stirring up wicked men to betray and crucify him, he accomplished what had been foretold from the beginning, that the heel of our Saviour should be bruised.

All these sufferings were severe; but they were light when compared with the sorrow which he felt from a sense of Divine wrath. The wrath of God does not signify furious anger, as in the case of men, but calm displeasure against sin, expressed in the punishment of offenders. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the object of it, not considered in himself, for he was the beloved Son of God, but as the representative of the guilty, who had engaged to "bear their griefs, and carry their sorrows." It was with our sins that his Father was displeased; and as our Saviour had made them his own in a legal sense, by the voluntary susception of the office of our Surety, he experienced the effects of the Divine anger, not only in bodily pain, but also in mental anguish. The scene exhibited in the garden of Gethsemane was awful: "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." ‡ An agony signifies, in this case, a violent agitation of mind, in which every excruciating feeling was mingled, except remorse and despair. The intensity of his anguish was demonstrated by the effect upon his corporeal frame. It has been questioned, whether this was literally a bloody sweat, or only resembled blood in the largeness of the drops. On the one hand, we may conceive his body to have been agitated to such a degree by the commotion of his mind, that a part of the blood was forced from the veins, and mingled with the other moisture which exuded from his pores. On the other, we may plead that the

* John xiv. 30.

† Luke xxii. 53.

‡ Ib. xxii. 44.

expression used by the Evangelist necessarily implies no more than resemblance, ὡσεὶ ὀρομβοὶ αἱματος, which is rendered in our version, *as it were great drops of blood*. Without venturing upon a positive decision of this question, although the latter opinion seems to be more probable, we observe that the agony of his mind must have been dreadful; for, even upon the lowest supposition, what could have produced such profuse perspiration in the open air, at a season when the night may be presumed to have been cold, and in a person of so much fortitude and self-command, but an intensity of mental feeling, which cannot be accounted for by any natural cause? The causes of his agony which some men have assigned, with a view to evade the evidence which it affords of the expiatory nature of his sufferings, are manifestly inadequate. To talk of its arising from the foresight of the treachery of Judas, the desertion of his disciples, the unbelief of the Jews, and the wickedness of mankind, is to say any thing rather than acknowledge the truth; and to suppose that it arose from the fear of death, would be to degrade him below his own followers, many of whom have encountered death in as terrible a form, not only with composure, but with triumph. Nothing but the burden of our guilt could have made him lie prostrate on the ground; nothing but an appalling sense of Almighty vengeance could have extorted from him the thrice-repeated prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Bitter must have been the ingredients of a cup, which he would have put away from his lips, although it was presented to him by the hand of his Father, and he had long purposed to drink it. How profound was his humiliation! We see him in extreme anguish, giving signs of ineffable distress by the agitation of his body; shedding tears, and uttering vehement cries; kneeling in the posture of a suppliant, and sinking to the earth under the dreadful pressure of his woes.

But his sorrows were not yet at an end. The solemnity of this scene was disturbed by the intrusion of a band of ruffians, who, in obedience to the command of their masters, rudely laid hold upon him, and dragged him as a felon to the tribunal of the high-priest, where he was accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to every indignity. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which inveterate and unmanly hostility

could invent : “ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” * There, at the judgment-seat of Pilate, and in the presence of Herod and his courtiers, he was treated as the vilest of mankind, and at last was delivered up as a victim to the clamour of the rabble. We then see him led forth to Calvary, and nailed to a cross, on which he hung for some hours, till he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Of the various modes of taking away life by violence, crucifixion is probably the most tormenting. It is one of the many contrivances of barbarity, the object of which is to make the unhappy sufferer feel himself dying. He was fixed to the cross with nails driven through his hands and his feet. Besides the exquisite pain caused by the perforation of so many parts full of nerves, which are the instruments of sensation, great torment must have arisen from the distention of his body, the forcible stretching of its joints and sinews by its own weight. To this circumstance, he alludes in the twenty-second Psalm : “ I may tell all my bones.” “ All my bones are out of joint.” † There are some kinds of torture which, by their severity, bring speedy relief. Nature sinks under them, and is released. As, in crucifixion, no vital part was touched, life was sometimes protracted for days. Our Lord expired sooner than the malefactors on his right hand and on his left, perhaps because he was partly exhausted by his previous agony ; but even his sufferings lasted for six tedious hours ; for they began at nine in the morning, and did not end till three in the afternoon.

Some modes of putting persons to death are deemed more honourable than others, although it is the merest fiction of imagination to attach an idea of honour to what is in its own nature a disgrace as well as a punishment. The most ignominious was reserved for our Saviour, who suffered the death of a slave. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, but was accounted so infamous that it could not be inflicted on a Roman citizen ; only the offscouring of mankind were nailed to the cross. The very manner, therefore, of our Saviour's death was a part of his humiliation. He was exhibited on Calvary as a man who had no civil rights, who was protected

* Is. l. 6.

† Ps. xxii. 17, 14.

by no law, whom society regarded as an outcast ; as one who had not only forfeited his life by his crimes, but deserved to be associated with the lowest and most worthless of our species. Accordingly, to add to the ignominy of his sufferings, and to express the utmost contempt for him, two malefactors were led forth to be crucified along with him, two robbers, as the word signifies which we have translated thieves, who by their daring outrages had called down upon their heads the just vengeance of the laws. In the midst of these he was crucified, as if he had been the worst of the three ; and thus the prophecy was fulfilled, “ And he was numbered with the transgressors.” *

The last circumstance which demands our attention, is, that he suffered an accursed death, for the law of Moses had said, “ Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” † There is some difficulty in settling the meaning of this denunciation. It cannot signify that every person who was hanged upon a tree, was doomed to eternal perdition ; because the sentence which fixes the future state of men, depends no more upon the manner of their death than upon any other trivial circumstance. But whatever be its import, it is applied to our Saviour ; and we are taught to consider the manner of his death as an indication that he died under the curse of the law. It was Pilate who condemned him to the cross ; but the sentence was ratified at a higher tribunal, and with aggravations which the power of the Roman governor could not add to it. He died by the sentence of his Father acting as a righteous Judge, and subjecting him to the punishment of sin. Great, therefore, as were his bodily torments, there were unseen sorrows which were far more severe ; sorrows of the same kind with those which caused his agony in the garden, and the extremity of which drew from him that mournful complaint, “ My God, my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ?” ‡

How great was his humiliation ! The Lord of life and glory appeared like a common mortal, and was distinguished only by the intensity of his sufferings, and the state of complete dereliction in which he expired. The multitude looked on with unpitying eyes ; heaven frowned in preternatural darkness, and all consolation was withheld from him.

* Is. liii. 12.

† Gal. iii. 13.

‡ Matth. xxvii. 46.

We shall have finished this view of the humiliation of Christ when we have added, that his body being taken down from the cross, was committed to the tomb, where it remained in a state of insensibility for at least thirty-six hours. Had it been immediately restored to life, it would have been said that it did not die, but only fainted on the cross; and the evidence of his Messiahship, which his resurrection affords, would have been weakened. Had it continued longer under the power of death, the natural process of corruption would have commenced, unless preserved by a miracle. But the Scripture had foretold that the Holy One of God should not "see corruption;"* and accordingly, the time was abridged; and on the morning of the third day he arose in triumph from the grave.

When Joseph had taken down his body from the cross, he laid it in his own sepulchre, which he had hewn out of a rock. May we not observe in this circumstance an illustration of the poor and destitute condition to which he had descended? Although it was his own world in which he sojourned, yet he was in it, not as a Lord, but as a servant, not as a possessor, but as a stranger who has no interest in any thing around him. His entrance into it was humiliating; his passage through it was comfortless; and when at last it cast him out as one unworthy to breathe the air, and see the light of the sun, there was no place to receive him save a tomb which one of his disciples had prepared for himself. It was the sepulchre of a rich man, but its present tenant was poor indeed. Yet why, we may say, should he have had a sepulchre of his own? Other men may provide a solitary dwelling for their bodies, for the sleep of the grave is long. It is their last abode, of which they will keep possession for ages; for "man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."† But our blessed Lord was like a way-faring man, who tarries only for a night in some resting place which he finds on the road. The next morning he hastens away from it, and pursues his journey to his home.

Our Redeemer stooped low indeed when he assumed our nature, but lower still when he submitted to be laid in the

* Ps. xvi. 10.

† Job xiv. 12.

grave. This is the last degree of humiliation. All the glory of man is extinguished in the tomb. If we viewed his prosperity with an eye of indifference, we now pity him; if his splendour excited our envy, the feeling dies away and hostility relents, when he, who like a flourishing tree spread his branches around, now lies prostrate in the dust. Who is this that occupies the sepulchre of Joseph? Is it a prophet or a king? No; it is one greater than all prophets and kings, the Son of the living God, the Lord of heaven and earth; but there is now nothing to distinguish him from the meanest of the human race; the tongue which charmed thousands with its eloquence is mute, and the hand which controlled the powers of the visible and invisible world is unnerved. The shades of death have enveloped him, and silence reigns in his lonely abode.

In the Apostles' Creed, it is said that "Christ descended into hell." With respect to the meaning of this article, there has been a great diversity of opinion. Some have supposed it to signify his burial; and, at first, when his descent into hell was mentioned, his burial was omitted; but both are now found in the Creed. Others, again, have interpreted it of the state of the dead, or death itself, and of the place of souls; which is divided into two regions, the one in which the patriarchs and saints who died before his coming were detained, and the other the receptacle of the souls of the damned. Some supposed that he went to the former to carry the patriarchs and saints with him to heaven; and others, that he went to the latter place to triumph over Satan, and, by preaching the Gospel, to deliver such of his miserable captives as should believe. These are notions which do not receive the least countenance from Scripture, and may be dismissed without wasting time in refuting them.

It would not be incumbent upon us to take notice of the article under consideration, as the creed in which it occurs, although bearing the name of the Apostles, is a composition long posterior to their age, were it not that its language is borrowed from the Scriptures, into the meaning of every part of which it is our duty to inquire. The following words are found in the sixteenth Psalm, and are applied to our Saviour by Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts: "Thou

wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." * 'Αδης, which is the word used in the New Testament, is derived from a *privative* and εἶδω, *I see*, or ἰδεῖν, the infinitive of the second aorist. It signifies, therefore, the invisible state of the dead; and, although it may sometimes denote the grave, it admits of a more extensive sense, and comprehends the place of the soul. The same is the meaning of the Hebrew word, לֹאֵשׁ, in the Old Testament. It is derived from שָׁאֵל, *to ask*; and denotes the place concerning which inquiry is made, because it is unseen and unknown. The word *hell*, is now used for the place of the damned; but originally it signified something obscure and concealed, and is of much the same import with לֹאֵשׁ and ἄδης. This, therefore, is the sense of the passage in the Psalms: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible state; nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption." Our Saviour is speaking of his death, by which his soul and body would be separated; the one going into the unseen state, the other being laid in the grave. The words are a prediction of his resurrection, and are applied to this event by the Apostle: "David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." † God would bring back his soul from the invisible state, and reunite it to his body, before it was corrupted. This explanation frees the passage from the perplexity in which it has been involved by those who, supposing לֹאֵשׁ and ἄδης to signify only the grave, understood שָׁמַיְתָא and ψυχῆ, which we translate *soul*, to mean the body; and thus, besides affixing an unusual and unnatural meaning to these words, represented the two parts of the verse as tautological. The view which we have given, preserves them distinct, and retains the common sense of the terms. The receptacle of our Saviour's soul was the invisible state, and the place of his body was the grave.

The humiliation of Christ manifests the greatness of his love, the riches of his grace. It was for us, men, and for our salvation, that he assumed human nature, and abased himself to the dust of death. He drew a veil over his glory, that he might remove our reproach, and raise us to heavenly

* Acts ii. 27.

† Ib. 31.

honours; he groaned and died, that we might obtain immortal felicity. He has acquired a title to our everlasting gratitude, by the most astonishing sacrifices.

Let us learn humility from his example. Pride should be for ever renounced by the followers of a lowly Saviour. Every part of his conduct, during his abode upon earth, is calculated to put it to shame; and we have in vain traced his progress from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary and the sepulchre of Joseph, if we retain our unbending attitude, and refuse to stoop to our brethren at the call of charity. The scene which we have contemplated should dispose us to condescend to the meanest, and to divest ourselves of every worldly honour, when we are called upon to do so for the glory of God. “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” *

* Matth. xi. 29.

LECTURE LXI.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.—PRELIMINARY REMARKS RESPECTING IT.—STATEMENT OF THE EVIDENCE OF HIS RESURRECTION.

ALTHOUGH, during the humiliation of our Saviour, a veil was drawn over his glory, yet some rays occasionally broke through, which manifested, to attentive spectators, his essential and official dignity. The sublime doctrines which he taught, the astonishing miracles which he performed, and the testimonies of the Divine approbation which were given to him, by voices and signs from heaven, proclaimed that he was the only-begotten Son of God, and the promised Redeemer of Israel. The dark scene of his death was illustrated by prodigies, which signified that he was no ordinary sufferer; for, at a time when there could be no natural eclipse of the sun, because the moon was in full opposition, there was darkness over all the land, from the sixth to the ninth hour; and when he expired there was a great earthquake, which splitted the rocks, and laid open the tombs, and the veil which concealed the holy of holies in the temple was torn, by invisible hands, from the top to the bottom. Even his burial was not without honour; for, although he had been put to death in the most ignominious manner, and under the imputation of the greatest crimes, his body was wrapped in fine linen and precious spices, by two persons of high rank, and was deposited in a magnificent sepulchre.

These circumstances, however, gave only a partial relief to the deep gloom which had settled upon him. His life, from the manger to the tomb, was a course of profound abasement. It was not till his resurrection that the glory which was to follow his sufferings commenced. That event, which removed the ignominy of his cross, revived the hopes of his disciples, and is the sure foundation of our faith in him, it is the design of this Lecture to consider.

It is related by the four Evangelists, and referred to in innumerable places by the other writers of the New Testament, as a fact, of which no doubt was entertained among Christians; insomuch that, assuming it as a first principle universally acknowledged, they reason from it in support of the doctrines of the Gospel, and for the confutation of errors. In the narratives of the Evangelists there are some discrepancies, which have been represented by infidels as affecting their credibility. Learned men have taken great pains to remove the apparent contradictions, and to shew how the different accounts may be reconciled. I shall not enter upon this discussion at present, but shall content myself with referring you to those who have treated directly of this subject, and of whom I shall mention two, to whose writings you have easy access,—West's Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the seventh preliminary Observation and the one hundred and fiftieth section of Macknight's Harmony of the Four Gospels. Were we at present considering the Evangelists as inspired writers, it would be necessary to examine every thing in the account which they have left us that might seem to indicate that they are as fallible as other authors, and have actually erred; at present, however, we appeal to them, not in this character, but merely as persons who have related a fact of which they were competent witnesses. Now, although we should allow that they are at variance in some particulars, this would not invalidate their testimony in the opinion of any reasonable man, as they all agree in the main fact, and differ only in some matters, which are not of much importance. In other cases, we deem the evidence sufficient, when we find substantial truth with circumstantial variety; that is, when a number of witnesses positively attest the same fact,

but disagree in some inferior points, which do not materially affect the truth of the general statement. Minute accordance rather awakens a suspicion of previous concert, while occasional discrepancy affords a strong presumption that the witnesses are independent, and that every man speaks from personal knowledge. The testimony of the Evangelists would, I have no doubt, be received as consistent and credible by any civil court, as not one of them has denied the great fact of the resurrection, or discovered the slightest hesitation in affirming it; and the differences among them, even although they were real, and not merely apparent as has been satisfactorily shewn, consist only in circumstances upon which the general truth of the history does not depend; as the precise time in the morning when the event took place, and the number of individuals who were present at a particular moment. It is manifest, that they did not write with a design to obviate objections; and that each of them, without considering what had been said, or might be said by others, recorded the event in the manner which occurred to his own mind. It is by comparing all their narratives, that we come to know the whole circumstances of the case, and are able to shew how one account may be reconciled with another. There are some parts of profane history, the general truth of which no person calls in question, although the testimony of those who have recorded them, is far from agreeing, in a variety of points. Let any of you read the history of Cyrus by Herodotus and Xenophon, and you will find not only a diversity, but a contradiction, in several important particulars; yet it was never doubted that there was such a man, who conquered Babylon, and performed the other exploits which antiquity has ascribed to him. There is a case more to our present purpose, because it is recent, and is related by eye-witnesses, and others who are supposed to have received information from eye-witnesses. Ten narratives have been published, of the attempt made by the late king of France * to escape, not long after the commencement of the revolution, which, in several points, contradict each other in the most wonderful and inexplicable manner, and furnish, it has been observed, a striking proof of the inaccuracy of human observation, and the infirmity of memory. Yet, not-

* Louis XVI.

withstanding the discrepancy among the witnesses with regard to the details, nothing is more firmly believed, than that the attempt was made, and did not succeed. We should have no reason to call in question the fact of the resurrection, although the differences in the narratives of the Evangelists were such, that we could not reconcile them, as they relate only to subordinate circumstances.

The account of the resurrection of our Saviour in the gospel of Matthew, which I shall quote, because it is the first, is as follows. “ In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake ; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye ; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here ; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead ; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him ; lo, I have told you.” * There is subjoined an account of the appearance of Christ to the women, and of his subsequent appearance to his disciples in Galilee, which it is unnecessary to recite.

I shall make some preliminary observations, before I proceed to lay before you the evidence of our Saviour’s resurrection. First, The event was not impossible, and consequently, if sufficient evidence be produced, we ought to give credit to the narrative, however extraordinary it may appear. We indeed have not experienced such an event, having never seen any person raised from the dead ; but as it would be a most irrational conclusion, that nothing is possible which we have not witnessed, so it cannot be denied that the cause assigned for the resurrection of Jesus was adequate. To a Theist, a man who believes the existence and almighty power of God, it will not seem incredible that he should raise the dead ; there being no greater difficulty in the restoration of a body to life,

* Matth. xxviii. 1—7.

than there was in originally forming it, and endowing it with a sentient and intelligent soul.

My second observation is, That, if Jesus was the Messiah, his resurrection was necessary to vindicate his character from the charges with which it was loaded. The alleged crimes for which he was condemned to die, were imposture and blasphemy. The Jews, full of carnal ideas and expectations, did not believe that a man of an appearance so mean, and a condition so humble, could be the Son of God, and the great deliverer of their nation, whom their imaginations had invested with the attributes of worldly grandeur: it seemed to them that his claim to these dignities was arrogant and impious. As Providence had permitted him to fall into their hands, it might have been supposed that it sanctioned their proceedings; and this conclusion would have been fully confirmed, if he had remained in the state of the dead. It would then have appeared that they had acted with laudable zeal for the honour of the Most High, who will not give his glory to another, and had been ministers of Divine justice in awarding due punishment to one whom their law pronounced to be unworthy to live. It would have appeared that, instead of purposing to save mankind from ignorance and sin, Jesus had come to deceive them with false pretences, to amuse them with delusive hopes, and to lead them to final perdition, by persuading them to apostatise from the living God, and commit themselves to him as their guide. But his return to life prevented the unfavourable inferences, which either friends or enemies might have drawn from his tragical end. His resurrection, by the power of his Father, demonstrated that he acknowledged him as his Son and his servant. He had permitted his life to be taken away, because he required it as a sacrifice for the sin of his people; he restored it, to shew that the demands of justice were satisfied. Hence the Scripture says, that "he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead,"* and that "the God of peace brought him again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant."† By this event, God acknowledged him to be his Son, and gave a solemn assurance that he is reconciled to guilty men.

* Rom. i. 4.

† Heb. xiii. 20.

A third observation is suggested by what has been now said, that our Saviour was raised by the power of his Father. Upon this fact depends the evidence, that he truly was what he affirmed himself to be. If God raised him from the dead, the sentence pronounced upon him by the Jews was reversed, and he who had expired in ignominy and torment was proved to be the Lord of glory. Sometimes, indeed, the New Testament ascribes the resurrection to our Saviour himself. Thus, we find him saying, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up again;"* and when he speaks of his body under the image of a temple, he represents its restoration as his own work: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."† In both passages, the resurrection is attributed to him, because his power was exerted in this, as it is in other external acts, in concurrence with that of his Father; for as they are one in nature, they are united in operation: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."‡ But it is the Father who is usually represented as the agent in this event; and this is so frequently done, that it is unnecessary to refer to particular passages. According to the order established in the plan of redemption, the resurrection was not properly the work of the Son, but of the Father. Jesus died in obedience to his will; he offered himself upon the cross, to appease his justice; and, to speak in the figurative style which has been employed on this subject, as he had engaged, in the character of our Surety, to pay the debt which we owed to God, it was fit and necessary that, from the hand of God, he should openly receive a discharge.

I observe, in the last place, that he was raised on the third day after his death. This was the time fixed by himself, and it was so well known, that his enemies were apprised of it. "Sir," the Jews said to Pilate, "we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again."|| He died on the afternoon of Friday, and was buried before sunset, when the day ended according to the Jewish reckoning. This was the first day. At sunset the Jewish Sabbath commenced, during the whole of which he rested in the grave. This is the second day. When the sun set again, the third day commenced. On the ensuing morn-

* John x. 18. † Ib. ii. 19. ‡ Ib. v. 17. || Matth. xxvii. 63.

ing, most probably between the dawn and sunrise, the soul of our Redeemer was re-united to his body, and he left the sepulchre of Joseph, the glorious conqueror of the king of terrors. It is common, in ordinary conversation, when we do not attend to logical accuracy, to put a whole day for only a part of it. According to this mode of speaking, Christ was three days in the grave. It would seem, that a revolution of the earth around its axis, which we call a day, the Jews sometimes called a day and a night. Retaining this form of expression, they would say of an event which took up a part of three days, that it was three days and three nights in accomplishing. It is in this way that we reconcile with the fact our Lord's own assertion, that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so should the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." * He used the language of his country; and his words were fulfilled, although he was not more than six or seven and thirty hours in the sepulchre, because these hours were made up of one whole day, and parts of two of those divisions of time, which the Jews called a day and a night. The time was long enough to shew that he was really dead, but not so long as to permit his disciples to sink into despair. Their dejection was great, and their hopes were ready to expire, when he appeared to them, and turned their sorrow into joy: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." †

But how do we know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead? The fact is denied by the Jews, and by infidels. Do we, who believe it, follow a cunningly devised fable, or does our faith rest upon a solid foundation? Persisting as we do, in maintaining the fact in the face of opposition, we should be able to give a reason of our hope to every man who asks us. We find an account of the resurrection in the Scriptures; but how do we know it to be true? on what grounds do we give credit to it? and what are the arguments by which we can demonstrate the reasonableness of our own faith, and repel the objections and cavils of unbelievers? I shall endeavour to lay before you a summary of the evidence upon which this important article of our religion depends.

First, The fact that the body of Jesus, which had been de-

* Matth. xii. 40.

† John xx. 20.

posited in the sepulchre of Joseph, was missing, is undisputed. It has been acknowledged by all classes of men, by enemies as well as by friends, that by some means it was removed. Had it been in the power of the Jews to shew it after the third day, the report of his resurrection would not have obtained circulation ; or if it had gone abroad among the credulous vulgar, who remembered his prediction, it would have been instantly quashed. The story which was contrived to prevent the people from believing it, and which will be afterwards considered, was a confession that the body could not be found. This is the first step in the proof. Jesus, having been taken down from the cross, was buried, but when the sepulchre was examined on the third day, it was empty.

In the second place, The body was not carried away by the disciples. They were so alarmed and terrified when they saw him seized by the emissaries of the priests and rulers, that they cannot be conceived to have engaged in such an enterprise, which was manifestly full of danger ; for it would be absurd to suppose that their fears had been allayed by his death, which was obviously calculated to increase them. But although, from some unaccountable cause, they had resumed their courage, and become bold at a moment when other men would have sunk into absolute despondency, the thing itself was impossible, because the sepulchre was strictly guarded by a band of soldiers, whom the unarmed disciples, unaccustomed to violence and blood, would not have ventured to encounter ; not to say that forcible means would have completely defeated their design, even if they had been successful, as it would then have been known that there had not been a resurrection, but merely a removal of the body by his friends. To evade the argument from the disappearance of the body, notwithstanding the guard upon the sepulchre, the Jews industriously circulated a report that it was stolen by the disciples while the soldiers were asleep. Nothing however is more improbable than that a whole guard of soldiers should be asleep at their post, and especially of Roman soldiers, who were under the strictest discipline, knew that a severe punishment awaited them if they should neglect their duty, and in the present case, had received particular orders to be vigilant. In these circumstances, it is incredible that they should have

all fallen asleep, and slept so soundly as not to be awakened by the rolling of the stone which closed the door of the sepulchre, and to give an opportunity to the disciples to accomplish their design in the most deliberate manner, for the body was not carried away in haste, but was stripped of the grave clothes, which were not scattered up and down, but regularly deposited in the tomb. The soldiers had not endured any uncommon fatigue by which they might have been overpowered. The watch had continued only about thirty-six hours; and during that period the guard had no doubt been changed. The story clumsily contrived by the Jewish rulers, contains internal evidence of falsehood. It makes the soldiers confess that they were asleep, and at the same time affirm what they could only have known, if they had been awake. If all their senses were closed, how could they know that the disciples had stolen the body? For aught that they could tell, the theft had been committed by some other persons. How could they know that it had been stolen at all? The only fact which they were competent to attest, if they were really asleep, was that, when they awoke, the stone was rolled away and the body was gone. Whether it had been restored to life and had removed itself, or had been removed by the agency of others, they were manifestly unqualified to say. The story therefore, although that part of it had been true, which supposed the soldiers to be asleep, proves nothing against the solemn declaration of the disciples, that their Master was raised by the power of God.

In the third place, Although it had been possible for the disciples to remove the body of our Saviour, we cannot conceive what should have induced them to make the attempt. The transference of his body from one place to another would not have restored him to life; and if he had continued under the power of death, it was of no importance to them in what spot his mortal remains were deposited. No place would have been more honourable than the sepulchre of Joseph. He was no longer their Master, he was not the Son of God, he was not the Messiah. He had excited hopes which he was not able to realize; he had completely deceived them, and was no more worthy of their attention. Why should they have put themselves to any trouble, or have exposed themselves to

any danger on his account ? Why should they have incurred the risk of being detected and punished by the Jews ? It appears from the evangelical history, that the intention of taking him away had never entered into their minds. Several women visited the sepulchre early in the morning of the third day, when the Sabbath was past ; but they came to weep over the body of their Lord, and to lay new spices upon it ; and when they found that the body was not there, they were thrown into the greatest distress, considering its removal perhaps as the deed of his enemies, who envied him this honourable tomb. “ Sir,” said one of them to Jesus himself, whom in her confusion she supposed to be the gardener, “ if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.” *

In the fourth place, If Jesus did not rise from the dead, and the whole was a fraud contrived by the disciples to save themselves from the reproach of having been the dupes of an impostor, it is astonishing that it was never discovered. It is astonishing that a few simple and uneducated men should have been able to devise and execute a plan, which has eluded all search, and has obtained credit among the wise and learned, as well as among the vulgar, for the space of eighteen hundred years. No person is able to produce a similar instance. How has it happened that the secret has not transpired ? Was there no Judas among the disciples, who would go and tell the chief priests and rulers all that he knew ? Was there not one honest man among them, who was compelled by his conscience to make a disclosure for the glory of God and the best interests of mankind ? The disciples were strictly examined, and punished for preaching the resurrection, and threatened with severer treatment if they would not be silent ; but they persisted in their original testimony. No flaw was ever discovered in the evidence, no contradiction, no hesitation. There was a boldness in their manner which confounded their adversaries, who, unable to refute their allegations, were compelled to supply the want of argument by violence and intimidation. Is this the character of false witnesses ? Nay, there were traitors among them, men whom the fear of suffering and the love of the world prevailed upon to apostate

* John xx. 15.

tise from the gospel ; but not one of them was able to reveal a single circumstance, tending to impeach the truth of the resurrection. Had any such discovery been made, it would have been triumphantly published to check the progress of Christianity ; but not a surmise of this kind is found in the records of antiquity. Many slanderous reports against the followers of Jesus were propagated ; but there is not so much as a hint that the secret had been blabbed out, and the story of the resurrection had been proved to be an imposture."

In the fifth place, If Christ did not rise from the dead, it is impossible to account for the conduct of his disciples, who endeavoured to persuade the world that he had risen. Men, we know, may be very zealous in propagating a false opinion, which they themselves believe ; there have been martyrs for error, as well as for truth. But who ever heard of a set of men, who devoted their time and talents, and exposed their life to hazard, with a view to establish a fact, of the falsity of which they were fully convinced ? If Christ did not rise from the dead, the disciples knew that the story of his resurrection was an invention of their own. Why should they have been anxious to make others believe it ? It appears, from what was formerly said, that it could not be from regard to their Master. The attachment to him, which they felt during his life, could not continue after his death, which had terminated his projects and their hopes, and proved irresistibly, that in whatever way his miracles might be accounted for, he was not the Messiah. The natural tendency of this discovery, and of their bitter disappointment, was, by a violent revulsion, to turn their former love into fixed hatred, and, when the first emotions of surprise and shame were over, to make them the loudest in exclaiming against the deception which he had practised upon them. It could not be from a wish to support their own credit by perpetuating the imposture, for how could they expect to succeed in their design ? Was the authority of fishermen and publicans so great, that their countrymen would be persuaded by their simple affirmation, of so great a miracle as the restoration of a dead body to life ? Mankind are not commonly so credulous, and, in the present case, they were the less ready to give their assent upon insufficient evidence, because they were strongly pre-

judiced against our Saviour, on account of his humble appearance and his ignominious sufferings, which were at variance with all their ideas of the character and state of the Messiah. It could not be from the expectation of worldly advantages, of which there was no prospect. Wealth and honours could not be looked for, till they had gained a number of proselytes ; and no man in his senses could have calculated on a single proselyte, except among the dregs of the people, to a cause so unpopular in itself, and supported by advocates so ill qualified to recommend it. Toil, and reproach, and perils, and death, stared them in the face. The world would rise up in arms against them. They would be derided and despised by the Gentiles, to whom the resurrection of the body seemed incredible and impossible. They would be persecuted by the Jews, who would transfer their hatred from Jesus himself, to those who were endeavouring to rescue his name from infamy, and to uphold the error which they were so eager to crush. In the absence of all the usual motives of action, we must attribute their conduct to a full conviction of the fact, “ We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”*

In the sixth place, Since it must be admitted, that there is no evidence of a design, on the part of the Apostles, to impose upon the world by a fabricated story, it may be insinuated, that they were themselves deceived by the power of imagination, which, it is known, has sometimes subjected individuals to the most extraordinary delusions. They have fancied that they distinctly saw objects, which were mere phantoms of the brain. But there is not a single circumstance, in the present case, which will authorise us to account, in this way, for the conduct of the disciples. Their minds were not in that state of eager expectation which is favourable to the workings of fancy ; for it appears that they were not looking for his resurrection, both from the visit of the women to the sepulchre, to see his body, and to lay fresh spices upon it, as if it had been to continue in the state of the dead ; and from the incredulity of the rest, to whom, when they told them that he had risen, their words seemed as “ idle tales.”† The two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, expressed themselves in the

* Acts iv. 20.

† Luke xxiv. 11.

language of despondency, “ We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel ;” * and, although they added, that some women who had been at the sepulchre, had reported that he was risen, they appear not to have believed them. In such a state of mind, there was no room for imagination to operate. It will be still more evident that they were not misled by it, if we consider that the appearances of Christ were frequent, not less than eight being recorded ; besides, that many more may be supposed during the forty days between his resurrection and ascension ; that some of them were made, not to a solitary individual, but to several of the disciples in company,—in one instance, to five hundred, who could not all be deceived ; that the appearances were not transient, but lasted for a considerable time, so that the spectators had full leisure to examine them ; that, while some of them were sudden, or without warning, others were the consequence of previous appointment ; that they took place, for the most part at least, not in the night, when the mind is more subject to illusion, but in the day, when the disciples were composed, and their senses were awake ; and, that the interviews were not distant and silent, but intimate and familiar,—Jesus having mingled with his followers, conversed freely with them, and given them all the satisfaction which the most incredulous could demand, saying to one of them in particular, who was slow in giving his assent, “ Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side ; and be not faithless, but believing.” † When all these circumstances are considered, we may pronounce it to have been impossible that they should be deceived. The supposition, indeed, is so palpably absurd, that it would hardly be worth while to reason with a person who should seriously maintain it.

In the last place, To these arguments for the resurrection of Christ, founded on the competency and honesty of the Apostles, as witnesses, we may add the success of their preaching, which is inexplicable on any other hypothesis but the truth of their testimony. To what cause was it owing, that multitudes of Jews and Gentiles gave credit to their report, acknowledged a crucified man to be a Divine Person,

* Luke xxiv. 21.

† John xx. 27.

and the Saviour of the world ; embraced his religion, with its humiliating doctrines and holy discipline, made a sacrifice of ease, and honour, and life in his service, and trusted in the promises of one whom they had never seen, for a recompense in the world to come ? The Apostles had no personal authority, to overcome those whom they addressed ; no learning to mislead, or eloquence to persuade them ; no rewards to tempt their cupidity ; no punishments to inflict on the incredulous. As men, they were contemptible in the eyes of the world ; and the doctrine which they taught had no charms which might atone for the defects of the publishers. It is unnecessary to speak of their success, because it is universally acknowledged. They effected a mighty revolution in the state of human affairs, and established a religion which superseded all the ancient systems, and has been professed, for seventeen centuries, by all the enlightened nations of the earth. Every effect must have an adequate cause. The first missionaries of Christianity possessed no natural means of ensuring its reception ; they must, therefore, have been assisted by supernatural power. Unless they had been able to bring forward to view a higher authority than their own, the world would not have listened to them.

Now, the only way in which this could be done, was by the performance of such miracles as are ascribed to them in the New Testament ; works evidently exceeding human ability, and wrought by the immediate interposition of Heaven. If a man should come and publish a new religion, and at the same time should give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and the use of their limbs to the lame, and life to the dead, we should be authorised to conclude that it was not an invention of his own, but was a revelation from the Lord of Nature, who alone could control its laws. The Apostles were invested with the power of working miracles. Their Master had therefore risen from the dead, for they performed the miracles in his name, or referred to him as their Author ; and, consequently, he was alive, and had supernatural gifts at his disposal.

It is astonishing that any person who saw diseases cured, and demons dispossessed, by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, should have refused to give credit to the report of his resur-

rection. Yet we know that there were men so obstinate in unbelief; and there is proof in the Scriptures, that the evidence of miracles is not irresistible. We must therefore proceed a step farther in accounting for the success of the disciples, in prevailing upon mankind to believe in their crucified Master. We must acknowledge an exertion of Divine power, in working internal as well as external miracles; in subduing their prejudices, fixing their attention seriously upon the subject, and disposing them to give their assent to the fact, notwithstanding the painful sacrifices which their conversion might require. We are thus presented with a new proof of the resurrection of Christ. If he had been in the state of the dead, he could have employed no power in favour of his religion. He could not have sent the Spirit, "to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." * The general success of the Gospel, which, extending beyond the limits of Judea, established itself throughout the Roman empire, and among nations which never submitted to its sway, and its effects in our own age, upon individuals whom it sanctifies, and inspires with peace and the hope of immortality, furnish satisfactory evidence that the Apostles spake the words of truth and soberness, when they confidently affirmed that their Lord, having been crucified and buried, rose again on the third day, and shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs. "We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." †

It has been said, that if Christ really rose from the dead, he should have shewn himself to the priests and rulers of the Jews, that they might be convinced, and become witnesses of the fact. Their testimony, it is insinuated, would have had much greater weight than that of his disciples, being the testimony of enemies. This objection is not worthy of much attention. It is a demand for a degree of evidence which has not been given, and it would be of force only if the evidence which has been given were defective. But if it is sufficient, it is plain that the demand is capricious and unreasonable, and, consequently, that its being withheld affords no ground of suspicion or complaint, and will not excuse the

* John xvi. 8.

† Acts v. 32.

unbelief of those who deny this fundamental article of our holy religion.

Had Jesus appeared to the priests and rulers of the Jews, they would either have acknowledged him to be the Messiah, or they would have persisted in rejecting him. If they had not believed in him, the evidence, instead of being strengthened, would have been weakened ; for it would then have been triumphantly said, that, although a few obscure and illiterate persons had been deceived by the artifice of his followers, others who were more sagacious, and had examined the matter with greater care, had discovered it to be an imposture. We should have been told by infidels, that the pretended resurrection was a trick of the disciples ; that it was a different person whom they endeavoured to pass off as their Master returned from the grave ; and that the cheat had been found out by the great men of Judea, whom they would have adorned with the high-sounding titles of learned, prudent, and intelligent. It is obvious that, although their unbelief might not have entirely invalidated the evidence, it would have encumbered it with difficulties, which might have greatly disquieted our minds. If, on the other hand, they had believed in Christ, it does not follow that the evidence would have acquired additional strength. Consider how, upon this supposition, the matter would have stood. Instead of a few witnesses, we should have had many ; the whole Jewish nation, or the greater part of it, instead of five hundred disciples. But the value of the testimony is to be estimated by the character, not by the number of the witnesses. At present, we have a competent number of persons, who delivered their testimony in such circumstances as afforded security for its truth ; in the presence of enemies, who possessed the means of detection, if there was any fraud, and in the face of the most formidable opposition, and who sealed it with their blood. If the whole Jewish nation had been converted, we should have been deprived of these proofs of veracity. There would have been no trial of the witnesses, no conflict of opinion, no parties to watch each other's proceedings ; the voice of the nation would have been unanimous ; but for this reason it would not have been so convincing, because it might have been alleged, and infidels

would not have failed to bring forward the objection, that it was a contrivance of the Jews, who were ready to give credit to any story which seemed to realize their hopes of the Messiah. We should have heard them loaded with the foulest abuse, as an illiterate, credulous, superstitious people, whose testimony was utterly unworthy of attention. The story, it would have been said, was promulgated where it was sure to be received, and no person had power or inclination to detect it. You will all agree with me, I trust, that the evidence, as it stands, is more conclusive than it would have been if the proposal of infidels had been complied with. I shall only add, that it is not made by them from a wish that Jesus had appeared to his enemies, and thus furnished irresistible demonstration of the truth of his religion, but with a design to prove that this want destroys all the other evidence, and that the story of the resurrection is a fable.

There is an objection against the resurrection of our Saviour, founded on the narrative of the Evangelist John, which, however, is hardly worthy of notice, and may be speedily dismissed. He relates that, on two occasions when the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood in the midst of the disciples.* As one solid substance cannot pass through another solid substance without dividing it, either what John relates did not happen, and consequently the narrative is false, or Christ did not appear in a real body, and it was only a phantom which the disciples saw. The simple answer to this trifling objection is, that, although the Evangelist plainly signifies that he entered in a miraculous manner, he does not determine the nature of the miracle. The doors were shut, and no doubt locked, for fear of the Jews; but Jesus might have opened them without being perceived. It is childish to cavil at a circumstance which can be so easily explained, especially as all the other facts of the narrative clearly shew that the disciples believed that he was appearing in a true body, and that they fully ascertained the fact during their personal intercourse with him.

The resurrection of Christ vindicated his character from the aspersions of his enemies. It demonstrated, at the same time, that he had accomplished the work which his Father

* John xx. 19, 26.

appointed him to perform, and had obtained eternal redemption for his people. It gives an assurance to those who believe in him, of a future triumph over death and the grave. He rose as their Representative, and they shall also rise after his example, and through his merits and power. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." * We cannot more properly conclude this Lecture than with the following words:—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." †

* 1 Cor. xv. 20—23.

† 1 Pet. i. 3—5.

LECTURE LXII.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

ASCENSION OF CHRIST; ITS TIME; THE NATURE IN WHICH, AND THE PLACE TO WHICH, HE ASCENDED; ITS WITNESSES, AND HIS ATTENDANTS.—HIS SEAT IN HEAVEN, AT "GOD'S RIGHT HAND."—OPINIONS RESPECTING THIS PHRASE.—IT IMPLIES THE POSSESSION OF SUPREME HONOUR, FELICITY, AND POWER.

JESUS CHRIST having finished the work assigned to him by his Father, it was not necessary that he should prolong his stay upon earth. It was rather necessary that he should leave it, in order to perform those benevolent offices, by which the benefits of his humiliation and death would be communicated to his followers; and, in particular, to make way for the coming of another Divine Person, not in a visible form, but in a powerful dispensation of light, and holiness, and consolation. "But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." * Accordingly, we read, that after he had given all necessary instructions to his disciples, he led them forth to Bethany, where he was parted from them, and received up into heaven.

First, The ascension took place forty days after his resur-

* John xvi. 5—7.

rection. "To the Apostles," Luke says, "he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven."* During this interval, he denied himself the full possession of his glorious reward, for the benefit of his disciples, and of the world, to whom they were to minister. The instruction which he imparted to them, they greatly needed, and it was adapted to their present circumstances. From the opportunities which they enjoyed, of hearing his public discourses, and conversing with him in private, they had undoubtedly derived much advantage; but their progress was not such as it ought to have been. In consequence of the influence of the national prejudices upon their minds, although they were forewarned of his death, it came upon them by surprise, and almost drove them to despair; so inconsistent was it with their preconceived notions of the character and work of the Messiah. It was necessary, therefore, to rectify their misconceptions, and to shew them that his sufferings were an essential part of the plan which he had undertaken to execute; and that, although nothing was less expected by them, they had been expressly announced by the prophets. That he was thus employed in the interval between his resurrection and ascension, we are informed by the Evangelists: "He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."† This exposition of the Scriptures was calculated to give relief to their minds, which, although comforted by the return of their Master from the grave, must have been perplexed and confounded by the unexpected events which had befallen him. For this reason it was now given; but their full instruction in the nature of his kingdom, or of the new dispensation which he designed to establish, was deferred to the day of Pentecost, when, according to his promise, he sent the Spirit to lead them into all the truth.

* Acts i. 3.

† Luke xxiv. 44—46.

This was not the only reason why our Lord did not immediately return to heaven. He continued upon earth, to give his disciples a full opportunity to be assured of the truth of his resurrection, as they were to be the witnesses of it to the world. To qualify them for this office, it was necessary that he should not merely pay them a transient visit, lest unbelievers should have said, that they were deceived by the force of imagination; but that he should appear so often, and in such circumstances, as not to leave the slightest ground for suspicion or cavil. Accordingly, he shewed himself not once only, but many times; not to separate individuals alone, but to several in company, and on one occasion, to more than five hundred persons; he conversed with them, allowed them to touch him, ate and drank with them. In any ordinary case, the evidence would have been deemed sufficient, even by the most sceptical, to establish the most important fact. So far, therefore, as respects their opportunities of being acquainted with this fact, the testimony of the Apostles cannot be reasonably called in question. They could all say, with the beloved disciple, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us."*

Secondly, Our Lord ascended in human nature. The man Christ Jesus has left the earth, and entered into that invisible region of the universe, where God sits on the throne of his Majesty. To his followers, it is a source of high consolation to know, that he has not laid aside their nature, but retains it amidst his glory; because they can look up to him with confidence, in the full assurance of his sympathy, and see, in his exaltation, an earnest of their future glory. But this is not the principal idea to which I request your attention. The point to be considered at present is, that it was solely in human nature that he ascended to heaven; or that, like his death, burial, and resurrection, the ascension can be predicated of him only as a man. As God, he could neither descend nor ascend, because his Divine essence, filling heaven and earth, cannot change its place, and does not admit of

* 1 John i. 1—3.

that exaltation, or that accession of glory, which the ascension implies. It is acknowledged, indeed, that his Divine glory, which, during his residence among mortals, had been concealed, was then unveiled, although even this concession requires to be explained, to make it consistent with truth ; the obscuration and manifestation of his glory properly referring to his human nature, and to men, not to the inhabitants of heaven, in whose eyes it always shone with undiminished lustre. But because, in a certain sense, it may be said to have been revealed when he ascended, some have maintained, that the ascension may be considered as relative to his Divine nature, as well as his human. But, in doing so, they are chargeable, when speaking of a plain fact, with substituting figurative for literal language, and thus confounding two things, which are distinct, and should be carefully separated. The subject of discussion at present is, not a change of state, but a change of place, which was competent to that nature alone, which, being finite, could exist only in a certain portion of space, and might be at one time on earth, and at another in heaven. The words of our Lord are worthy of attention : “ No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.”* There is an apparent confusion and contradiction in this passage, and, had it related to any other person, it might have been pronounced to be unintelligible. Of the Son of man it is said, that he has come down from heaven, and yet was in heaven. To those who are convinced of his Divinity, the passage presents no difficulty. His two natures being personally united, that is justly affirmed of the one, which is strictly true only of the other. The existence of his human nature commenced upon earth, and it had never been in heaven ; for the opinion of the elder Socinians, that he was taken up to it before he entered upon his ministry, to be instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, is a dream, or a dishonest figment, devised with a view to evade the evidence arising from this and other passages, of his pre-existence and Divinity ; but he had come down from it, by the manifestation of himself in human flesh, yet was still in it, by the immensity of his essence. Of a literal change of

* John iii. 13.

place, as God he was incapable ; it was in his assumed nature, that he who had first descended, afterwards ascended, “ that he might fill all things,” heaven with his glory, and the earth with the blessings of his grace.

Thirdly, The place to which he ascended was heaven, as the Scriptures declare, in many passages. One Apostle affirms, that he ascended “ above all heavens ;” but his meaning is ascertained by a reference to the prevailing opinion of his age. According to the system of the Jews, there were three heavens ;—the aerial heaven, which is the region of clouds and meteors ; the starry heaven, in which the celestial luminaries are fixed ; and the heaven of heavens, in which the throne of God is erected. Our Redeemer ascended above the two former, or the visible heavens, and entered into the latter, which is concealed from mortal eyes by an impenetrable veil. Where the highest heaven is seated, we cannot tell ; but, agreeably to an idea which seems to be natural because it is common, it is said to be above us ; and hence his passage to it from this world is called an ascent. It is the place in which the glory of God, which is partially seen in his works, is fully revealed, angels and the departed spirits of the just at present reside, and the redeemed, after the resurrection, will have their everlasting habitation.

Heaven may be considered under the two different notions of a palace and a temple. In the one view it is the seat of power and majesty, in the other it is the place of solemn worship. Into heaven considered as a palace, Jesus entered in the character of a king, who having vanquished his enemies, and established his title to the crown, went to take possession of his kingdom. To this event the following passage is applicable, although in the first instance, it may be understood to have referred to the entrance of the ark into the tabernacle : “ Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates ; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors ; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory ? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.” * Into heaven considered as

* Ps. xxiv. 7—10.

a temple, he entered in the character of a priest; and his ascension was prefigured by the entrance of Aaron, and his successors in office, into the most holy place, to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices, and to burn incense before the mercy-seat. The first and fundamental duty of the priesthood, he performed upon earth by offering that immaculate and invaluable sacrifice, which appeased divine justice, and obtained eternal redemption for his people; it remained to plead the merits of his death, and obtain by his intercession the blessings for which he had paid the price of his blood. For this purpose he ascended, as we are informed by an apostle in the following words: "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."*

Fourthly, The witnesses of his ascension were his disciples, whom he had assembled for this purpose. We are not informed, how many of them were together at this time. On one occasion he was seen by more than five hundred brethren; but whether it was at his ascension, or when he met with his followers in Galilee, we cannot certainly say. But although we should suppose, what however is not very probable, that none were present but the twelve Apostles, the number was more than sufficient to attest the fact. They were witnesses qualified in every respect; and as their testimony would be readily received by the other disciples, who had full confidence in their veracity, so it is entitled to credit among all other men, confirmed as it is by miracles, which they performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, whom their Master promised to give them after his ascension, and whom he did actually send on the day of Pentecost. Jesus did not withdraw secretly from our world, lest it should have been said by unbelievers, that we know not what is become of him, and there is no reason why we should take any farther concern in him. As his entrance, although obscure in respect of his parentage, and the place where he first saw the light, was illustrated by a vision of angels, who proclaimed it to the shepherds of Bethlehem; so his departure, although unknown to the great men of Jerusalem, and the inhabitants in general, was an object of attention to his chosen friends. It might have been after-

* Heb. ix. 24.

wards revealed to them by the Spirit, who instructed them in many other secret things ; but the importance of the fact required, that it should take place in such a manner as to be attested by ocular witnesses. It appears that he was not carried away by a sudden rapture, but slowly rose from the earth, and that the disciples had leisure to follow him with their eyes, till he had ascended to a considerable height, when a cloud received him out of their sight, or intervened between him and the earth. Their wistful looks were fixed upon the spot, where they had caught the last glimpse of their beloved Master ; and they would have stood in the same posture, till night had enveloped the heavens in its shade, in the vain expectation of seeing him again, had not two angels appeared to them, and said, “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” *

The place from which he ascended was the Mount of Olives, and in the vicinity of Bethany. Gethsemane was also on the Mount of Olives. On this coincidence it has been remarked, that the place was chosen, that as he had there given a proof of human weakness, while he endured the wrath of his Father, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground, so he might there, by rising to heaven, display the power and glory of his Divinity ; that his exaltation might commence on the same spot where he had been in the lowest state of abasement and sorrow ; and that, from the scene in which he had struggled with the powers of darkness, he might soar above principalities and powers. And hence, it has been said, we should learn that we are not to expect a triumph, till we have encountered the toils and perils of the contest, and that we should not despair of obtaining the kingdom when our warfare is accomplished. These are pious reflections ; but their solidity depends upon the fact, that he ascended from the very spot which had witnessed his agony. Of this, however, we have no certainty. The Mount of Olives was of some extent ; and, for aught that we can tell, the place of the ascension might be at a considerable distance from Gethsemane. If this should be the truth, the reflections founded

* Acts i. 11.

on the presumed identity of the places, however good in themselves, must be classed with many other suggestions of fancy.

Our Lord was attended, at his ascension, by the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Only two of them, according to the Scriptures, were seen ; but we have reason to believe, that thousands were present, although invisible to human eyes : “ The chariots of God,” says the Psalmist, “ are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels : the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive : thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” * They were present, not like the Roman soldiers, who followed their victorious general as having a share in his triumph, because by their valour his battles had been won ; but, to add to the splendour of the scene, and to celebrate his mighty achievements. The thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers of heaven, were put in subjection to him ; and they came, on this occasion, to do homage to their Lord, and to swell his train when he took possession of his kingdom.

His leading captivity captive when he ascended, denotes his triumph over the infernal powers. They who had made men captives by their successful stratagems, saw the spoils wrested from their hands, and were themselves made captives by our Almighty Redeemer. Whether they were compelled to be present, and were exhibited as vanquished foes, disgraced and ruined, and reserved to everlasting punishment, we are not warranted by a single expression, of which no explanation is given, to affirm. There is no doubt that our Saviour triumphed over them while he ascended ; and that, in his exaltation to the throne of heaven, they beheld a fearful presage of the final overthrow of their kingdom.

Let us now proceed to consider what followed the ascension of Christ : “ So then,” says the Evangelist Mark, “ after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.” †

Every person is sensible that this language is figurative. Neither the right hand of God, nor the posture ascribed to our Saviour, can be literally understood. God is a pure

* Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18.

† Mark xvi. 19.

Spirit, and has no bodily members. The Scriptures expressly forbid us to make any visible representations of him, because they must be false and degrading; and the Israelites were particularly reminded, that, in the day that God spoke to their fathers, they saw no similitude. When mention, therefore, is made of the eyes, the ears, the feet, and the hands of God, it is evident that we ought to explain them in consistency with the spirituality of his essence, and to consider them as metaphors, employed to assist us in conceiving his perfections and operations. Hence, although our Redeemer, in his state of exaltation, has a material body, which is capable of corporeal actions and postures, it requires little reflection to perceive that "his sitting" is figurative, as well as "the right hand," at which he is said to sit. We are as ignorant of the nature and employments of glorified bodies, as we are of the nature and employments of spirits. Besides, the Scriptures are not uniform with respect to the posture which they assign to our Redeemer; for as at one time he is said to sit, he is at another said to stand, at the right hand of God. We are, therefore, under the necessity of supposing, that their design is not to fix our attention upon the posture itself, but upon the state of which it is expressive. Instead, then, of inquiring separately, what is meant by the right hand of God, and what by sitting at it, I shall consider them conjunctly, and point out their united import.

Before I proceed, however, I shall make a remark or two upon the other posture which is sometimes assigned to him. When the blessed martyr Stephen was surrounded with his infuriated enemies, being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw Jesus "standing on the right hand of God."* If you bear in mind that it is not the posture, but the state, which, in both cases, should be considered, you will perceive that the different representations are not contradictory. Sitting is the posture of a sovereign or a judge, or a person who has finished his labours, and is enjoying ease; standing is the posture of the man who waits to receive a friend, or is prepared to defend him. On the present occasion, when a holy man was undergoing a dreadful trial of his faith, Jesus rose, if we may speak so, from his

* Acts vii. 55.

throne to send to him the necessary succours of his grace, to meet and welcome his spirit as soon as it should escape from its persecutors, and to introduce him into the presence of his Father, that he might receive from his hand the recompense of an unfading crown. To Stephen the sight was consoling. It sustained his courage amidst the terrors of a violent death, and enabled him to resign his mortal life in the joyful hope of a better : “ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Having subjoined another petition for his murderers, “ he fell asleep.”

There is scarcely a doctrine or a fact in Scripture, which folly or malignity has not perverted, when it happened to stand in the way of some favourite opinion. The sitting of Christ at the right hand of God, instead of being considered as expressive of his exaltation, has been converted into a proof of his inferiority to the Father, because the left hand was the place of honour, as the abettors of this notion endeavour to shew by quotations from ancient writers. It might be said to such men, that, as our Saviour ascended to heaven in the character of Mediator, nothing is gained by proving his inferiority to the Father in that character ; for we readily acknowledge it, but at the same time maintain, that it is not inconsistent with his essential equality. But the argument on which they found the conclusion is false. Whatever may have been the practice of some other nations, as the Scriptures were written by Jews, and addressed to them in the first instance, it is by their usages that we must explain this expression, and others of a similar nature. Now, among them the right hand was the place of honour. “ The man of God’s right hand,” * is the man whom God delights to honour. “ A wise man’s heart” is said to be “ at his right hand,” because he engages in honourable pursuits ; but “ a fool’s heart” to be “ at his left” hand, because he acts imprudently and shamefully. † When Joseph presented his two sons to his father, he set the elder on his right hand, and the younger on his left ; but Jacob, to shew his preference of the younger, laid his right hand on his head. ‡ Nothing is more decisive of the point, than the order in which men will be arranged on the day of judgment, when “ some shall awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting con-

* Ps. lxxx. 17.

† Ecc. x. 2.

‡ Gen. xlviii. 14.

tempt;" for then the Judge will set the former on his right hand, and the latter on his left. Enough has been said to expose this abortive attempt to wrest the expression which we are now considering, to serve the purposes of a party.*

There is another opinion still more strange, that Christ's sitting at the right hand of God, denotes that, in a certain sense, he is higher than the Father. It is so extravagant, and in fact so unintelligible, that it would be a waste of time to attempt to refute it. He is superior, it is said, to the Father, not in reality, but in the administration of his kingdom. It is sufficient to oppose to this impious assertion the words of an Apostle: "The Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him."†

The right hand is the place of honour. It is so esteemed among us, and was so accounted by the Jews. When Solomon's mother came to him, "he sat down upon his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand."‡ It is implied, therefore, in the position assigned to our Saviour in heaven, that he is invested with great dignity and glory. I shewed, in the former part of this Lecture, that the ascension related solely to his human nature, because his Divine was incapable of change of place, being always in heaven as well as upon earth. I now observe, that it was equally incapable of any accession of glory, because it was already infinitely glorious, in the possession of all possible perfection. But its glory was veiled during his humiliation, and only a few rays of it were seen in the miraculous works which he performed, and the sublime doctrines which he published. As the sun, having scattered the clouds which covered his face, pours his bright effulgence upon the earth, so our Redeemer, upon his exaltation to heaven, appeared in all the majesty of his character, and shewed to all its blessed inhabitants, that the Son of man is also the Son of God, and the equal of the Father. To this manifestation of his original dignity, after the temporary obscuration which it had suffered, these words of his intercessory prayer may be referred: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with

* Vide Witsius, in Symb. Apost. Exer. xxi. §. 5.

† 1 Cor. xv. 27.

‡ 1 Kings ii. 19.

thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." *

But there was honour conferred upon our Saviour in human nature, and in the character of Mediator; and to this there is a particular reference, when he is said to be seated at the right hand of God. It is elevated above men and angels; it is the highest of the works of God. Even in its state of humiliation, its powers surpassed those of the most richly gifted creature; no wisdom, for example, equal to that which he displayed, being found among the inhabitants of heaven; and now, we may presume, its faculties are expanded to the utmost limit of which they are susceptible. Of the external glory of his human nature, we can form no idea, because we have received no information on the subject; but this we may venture to say, that in him is displayed the perfection of majesty and beauty. His appearance to John, in the isle of Patmos, was awful and majestic, but, partly at least, symbolical, like the visions of the prophets. On the mount of transfiguration, his countenance shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. Without entering into particulars, the Scriptures declare that his body is glorious, and is the pattern according to which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned. It is not inconsistent with the ascription of transcendent honour to him, that he promises to give his saints to sit down with him upon his throne. They will share in his glory, but not in equal measure; their glory will be similar, but not in the same degree. He is "the first-born among many brethren;" † entitled to a double portion; the heir and the Lord of the family. Hence, notwithstanding their elevation, they will acknowledge him as their superior, and do him homage. While the angels adore him, the saints will cast down their crowns before his throne, and both will join in expressions of admiration, and gratitude, and praise. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." ‡

* John xvii. 5.

† Rom. viii. 29.

‡ Rev. v. 11, 12.

It is unnecessary to refer to a distinction formerly made, and to remark, that he is not the object of worship as man, nor properly as Mediator; because, as he is in this character the servant of the Father, so it is by him that our prayers and praises are presented. It is enough to know, that it is the incarnate God who is worshipped by the heavenly congregation, and that, although the foundation of this worship is the Divine perfections of which he is possessed, the great motive to it is his redeeming love, and it is addressed to him without distinction of natures. "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." *

But this is not the only idea suggested by his sitting at the right hand of God. It imports the possession of happiness; but whether this idea is founded, as some suppose, on the fact that gifts are usually conferred by the right hand, or is derived from some other source, it is not material to inquire. That the expression admits of this sense, is evident from the following passage: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." † It is to be particularly noticed, that these words are spoken by the Messiah, and with a view to his exaltation. They follow the declaration of his confident hope, that God "would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer him to see corruption, but would shew him the path of life," or raise him from the grave.

For the joy which was set before him he endured the cross, and despised the shame; and he has now entered into it. Sitting at the right hand of God, he is nearer to him than any man or angel; and this nearness implies not only a closer relation, resulting from the union of his human nature to the divine, but also more intimate fellowship. The presence of God is a source of felicity. The place which we call heaven, would not be happier than the most desolate spot upon earth, if he did not there impart the fulness of his love; and a day in the sanctuary would not be preferable to a day of bodily rest at home, were it not the chosen scene, on which he displays the wonders of his grace. The light of his countenance awakens emotions of joy in the souls of the righteous, with which the most intense sensations of worldly pleasure are not to be compared. If the meanest saint is destined to enjoy a

* Heb. ii. 9.

† Ps. xvi. 11.

degree of felicity, which it has not entered into the human mind to conceive, what must be the communication of divine love to him, who is nearer to God than all the saints, is the object of his infinite approbation and delight, and has glorified him in the highest in the work of redemption ! What shall be done to the man whom he delights to honour ? The reward is proportioned to his merit, the height of his joy may be estimated by the depth of his previous sorrow. "The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord ; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice ! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness ; thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation ; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever ; thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." * While he partakes of all the pleasures which are at the right hand of God, he rejoices to reflect that his great undertaking is accomplished, to behold around him the fruits of his labours, and to know that in due time heaven will be filled with millions of the redeemed, who will for ever praise him as the author of their happiness. "He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied." †

Again, the right hand is an emblem of power. This is the general idea which is suggested, when hands and arms are attributed to God, because it is with our arms and hands that we exert our strength. The right hand is most commonly used, and, whatever cause may be assigned for this curious fact, is a more powerful instrument than the left hand. The sitting of our Saviour at the right hand of God, signifies on this account that he is exalted to authority and dominion. "Hereafter," he said to the Jewish Council, "shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." ‡

The Psalmist refers to the power of the Messiah in his state of exaltation in these words : "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." || It was exhibited to Daniel in the night visions, when "he saw, and behold, one like the Son of man came with

* Ps. xxi. 1—6. † Is. liii. 11. ‡ Matth. xxvi. 64. || Ps. cx. 1.

the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." * Our Saviour announced it to his disciples after his resurrection : " All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth ;" † and Paul speaks thus of it in his Epistle to the Philippians : " Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." ‡ There is a distinction to be observed between his essential and his mediatorial kingdom. The former he always possessed, and since it belonged to him as God the Creator of all things, he could not lay it aside even during his humiliation. The latter he received when he ascended ; for although he had a right to it, when he rose from the dead, and therefore told his disciples, that it was already given to him, it was upon his entrance into heaven, that he sat down upon his throne. His Mediatorial kingdom comprehends power to establish, and govern, and defend, and bestow eternal salvation upon his church, and power to render all other things subservient to its interests. He ought to be considered not only as the King of Zion, but as the Lord of the Universe. Hence, when we say that the world is under the government of God, we should reflect, that properly it is not the Father of whom we speak, except in this sense, that he always acts in concurrence with the Son ; but that the declaration of our Saviour, that " the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," § is true of the whole administration of affairs. Our Redeemer holds the sceptre, and sways it over angels and men. He hath put all things under his feet.

There is one other idea connected with his sitting at the right hand of God, which it may be proper to mention, as it is suggested by the following contrast between him and the priests of the law : " Every priest standeth daily ministering,

* Dan. vii. 13, 14. + Matth. xxviii. 18. ‡ Phil. ii. 9—11. || John v. 22.

and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.”* The posture of the legal priests imported that they were constantly engaged in the service of the altar, and consequently had not accomplished the design of their office, by the perfect reconciliation of the people to God. The high priest never sat down in the most holy place, but having stood for some time before the mercy-seat, he retired to offer new sacrifices, and again to go the round of the sacred offices. But Jesus Christ, when he entered into heaven, sat down at the right hand of God, and is “a priest upon his throne.” His posture signifies that his work is finished. His one oblation has satisfied the demands of justice, and his Father has testified his approbation of it, by conferring upon him honour and authority.

The present exaltation of Jesus Christ is a source of great consolation to his followers. It was not solely for his personal glory that he ascended, but also for the good of his people, in promoting which he employs all the interest and power which he possesses. His intercession ensures the acceptance of their duties, not as the condition of salvation, but as testimonies of their love to God, and their filial subjection to him. His government is calculated to tranquillize and comfort their minds amidst the vicissitudes of life. As they are assured, that nothing can happen to themselves without his appointment, and that every word will be overruled for their final welfare, so they may look upon all the changes in the world as under the control of his power, and the direction of his wisdom, as constituting parts of his plan, working for ends worthy of him, and subservient to the establishment of his kingdom. Affairs may not proceed in a train agreeable to our views and expectations; but it will repress every murmur and every wish for a different order, to reflect that he presides over them, who is the patron of truth and righteousness, and the faithful guardian of those who love him: “The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”†

The security of the church depends upon the exercise of

* Heb. x. 11—13.

† Ps. xcvi. 1.

the power, with which Christ was invested at his ascension. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it, because it is defended by his omnipotent arm. It has been deemed a proof of Cæsar's greatness of mind, although, in truth, it proved nothing but his presumption and impiety, that he said to the sailors in a storm, "Fear not, this ship carries Cæsar;" as if the elements would have done homage to that ambitious spirit. The wind and waves did indeed respect him on that occasion, but only as they have since respected, and will always respect, the meanest and most worthless of mankind, whose hour is not come. The ocean will not swallow up those who are doomed to perish by the sword. But the church may assume the attitude and the language of confidence and defiance when she is menaced by the powers of earth and hell, because He is her protector, who can render their counsels and efforts abortive, and scatter them with his breath: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble: Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." †

To him who is exalted above principalities and powers, profound reverence and prompt obedience are due. This is the command to the church: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." We are under law to Jesus Christ; and as our consciences should recognise his authority, and bow to it, so it will render our obedience the homage of the heart, devoutly to remember, that his right to demand it is founded on the deep humiliation and exquisite sufferings to which he submitted for our salvation. Although we have not seen his glory with our eyes, as the beloved disciple did in the isle of Patmos, yet, being admitted to contemplate it through the medium of revelation, which gives such descriptions of it as are fitted to excite mingled emotions of reverence and confidence, let us, like him, fall at his feet, and say with another saint, "Truly, we are thy servants; we are thy servants, thou hast loosed our bonds: we will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord." †

* Ps. xlv. 1, 2.

† Ps. cxvi. 16, 17.

LECTURE LXIII.

CHRIST'S STATE OF EXALTATION.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT, A DOCTRINE OF REVELATION.—THE TIME AND DURATION OF IT.—THE PLACE OF JUDGMENT.—THE PARTIES.—CHRIST THE JUDGE: HIS FITNESS FOR THE OFFICE.—CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS APPEARING.—STANDARDS OF JUDGMENT.—THE SENTENCES, AND THEIR EXECUTION.

“ YE men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” * These were the words of the two angels who appeared on Mount Olivet to the disciples, while they were wistfully looking after their Lord, who had ascended in their sight, and was now concealed by a cloud. He will come again at the appointed time; and it will be the purpose of his coming to close the administration which he is at present carrying on at the right hand of his Father, by the public distribution of rewards and punishments. To this consummating act of his royal authority, I shall, in this Lecture, direct your attention.

In treating this subject, it is usual to bring forward arguments suggested by reason, in support of the declarations of Scripture respecting the future judgment of the human race. Were we to deny that justice is essential to the Supreme Governor of the universe, we should divest him of all moral excellence, and leave only those physical attributes which

* Acts i. 11.

distinguish him from men, as almighty power, perpetual duration, and immensity of essence. We should transform him, whom even the heathens called *Optimus Maximus*, into the *Arimanes* of the Persians, a being of malignant dispositions, the author of darkness and confusion, and every evil work. But we find that, at present, justice is only partially exercised, and the common course of things is conducted without any marked regard to the character and actions of men. Those whom we call good, because their actions are conformable to moral distinctions, are often left to struggle with poverty, and to pine in affliction ; while bold transgressors, men who set their mouths against the heavens, and give loose reins to their appetites and passions, not seldom enjoy outward peace, and pass their days amidst affluence, and a succession of delights. The exceptions serve the more clearly to illustrate the imperfection of the present system ; to shew us more distinctly what, in our apprehension, might be, and ought to be ; and call more loudly for a different order of things. Human laws, which, in so far as they are just, may be considered as making a part of the moral administration of the universe, because they are sanctioned by Heaven, supply this defect in part, but only in part. Besides that, in general, they afford no reward to the obedient, but simple protection, there are innumerable cases of delinquency which they cannot reach, in consequence of the limited knowledge and power of those who execute them, and of other causes which obstruct the exercise of authority. Many crimes are secret, unknown to all but the guilty ; and, of public crimes, the authors are not always discovered, or they escape from justice by flight, or they set it at defiance ; or, what is worst of all, they find means to prevent it by bribery and perjury. What then is the result of this view of the state of human affairs ? Shall we conclude, in opposition to the clear dictates of reason, and the consent of all nations, that there is no God ? Or shall we say, with some impious philosophers, that he is regardless of the actions of men ; and that, instead of a wise and righteous Providence, blind fortune presides ? Or rather, compelled by the best sentiments of our minds, which recognise a Deity, and invest him with every moral perfection, shall we not rest in this obvious inference, that, since justice

is not at present fully displayed, another dispensation will follow, under which there will be an exact retribution ; that a time will come, when the wrongs of the injured shall be redressed, when the proud transgressors shall stoop to a superior power, when every work shall be brought into judgment, and every secret thing shall be revealed ?

To this reasoning no person of candour will object, so far as it goes to prove a future retribution. If there is a just God, it must ultimately be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. Accordingly, a recompense in another state was expected by those who did not enjoy the benefit of Divine revelation, and the expectation was founded partly upon traditional authority, and partly also upon argument. They believed, that, when the souls of men left their bodies, they appeared before certain judges appointed to take cognizance of human actions, Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, who, after an impartial investigation, pronounced sentence upon them, and consigned them to the fields of bliss, or to the region of torment. But the judgment which the Gentiles anticipated at the close of their mortal course, was individual and private, like the sentence which Christians believe will be pronounced upon every man immediately after his death ; and this is all that the reasoning proves. Divines, therefore, are chargeable with inaccuracy, when they employ it in support of the doctrine now under consideration, since it serves only to establish the fact, that men will be recompensed, not that they will be recompensed by a procedure carried on in the presence of assembled generations. Having convinced ourselves that God will render to every man according to his works, we can advance no farther by the light of reason, than the heathens did, who held that men appeared individually before the infernal judges, or at most, along with those who happened to arrive in the other world at the same time, and, that they were dismissed without any farther solemnity, each to his proper place.

It is to revelation alone that we are indebted for the knowledge of a general judgment, in which the proceedings will take place in the sight of angels and men ; the righteous and the wicked will be arranged in separate classes, and all will be witnesses of the Divine justice, in the reward of the good,

and the punishment of the bad. I shall content myself with a few passages in which it is announced. "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."† "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."‡

It may be thought that the ends of justice are answered when individuals are treated according to their desert, and as this is done immediately after death, that no further procedure is necessary. Justice, as it respects private persons, consists in regulating their conduct by its dictates, in their transactions with friends, neighbours, and mankind in general; and if they uniformly preserve inviolate the rights of others, all its demands are fulfilled. But the justice of a governor belongs to the public, who claim not only that it should impartially execute the laws, but that it should be exercised in such a manner as is most conducive to the general interests. The rewards to which meritorious individuals are entitled ought not to be conferred, and the punishment which transgressors have incurred ought not to be inflicted, in silence and secrecy, but both should be openly dispensed for the honour of the governor's character, and the advantage which will redound to the community from the salutary influence of example. As God is the Governor of the world, it is not sufficient that he is just, unless he also appear to be just. The retribution which takes place after death is unknown. We see men of different characters die; but we cannot trace the flight of their souls into the invisible world, nor hear the sentence pronounced from the tribunal before which they appear; and our conjectures upon the subject may often be very far from the truth. Hence a general judgment, at which all the descendants of Adam will be present, seems necessary

* Acts xvii. 31.

† 2 Cor. v. 10.

‡ Matth. xxv. 31, 32.

to the display of the justice of God, to such a manifestation of it as will vindicate his government from all the charges which impiety has brought against it, satisfy all doubts, and leave a conviction in the minds of all intelligent creatures, that he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. It is expedient that at the winding up of the scheme, all its parts should be seen to be worthy of Him by whom it was arranged and conducted. In this way, those who have witnessed, with many disquieting thoughts, the irregularity and disorder in the present system, will have ocular evidence that there never was the slightest deviation from the principles of equity, and that the cause of perplexity, was the delay of their full operation. They will see the good and the bad no longer mingled together, and apparently treated alike, but separated into two classes, the one on the right hand of the Judge, and the other on his left, and distinguished as much at least by their respective sentences, as by the places which they occupy. We perceive, then, the reason that the judgment passed upon each individual at the termination of his life, will be solemnly ratified at the end of the world. There may be another reason for the public exercise of justice in the final allotment of the human race. It may be intended to be a spectacle to the universe; it may be an act of the divine administration, which will extend its influence to all the provinces of his empire. We are sure that angels will witness it; and if there are other orders of rational creatures, it may be a solemn lesson to them, by which they will be confirmed in fidelity to their Creator, and filled with more profound veneration of his infinite excellencies.

The time of the general judgment is a secret which God has reserved to himself. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven."* An opinion seems to have been entertained by some persons in the primitive church, that the awful event was not distant; but only the lying lips of such a man as Gibbon could dare to say "that its near approach had been predicted by the Apostles, the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious

* Matth. xxiv. 36.

coming of the Son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth." * The prophecy of our Saviour to which he refers, evidently relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, and is interspersed with several circumstances which clearly prove, that, although the style is bold and highly figurative, it is a local calamity which is announced, a desolation beyond the limits of which it was possible to escape, an event which would be followed by other events in a long succession ; in a word, that the prophecy does *not* foretell the end of the world. It is so far from being true that its near approach was predicted by the Apostles, that, when the notion began to prevail, they set themselves to oppose it, as we learn from the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which Paul beseeches them in the most solemn terms, not to be shaken in mind or troubled, as if the day of Christ were at hand, and proceeds to inform them of other events which would precede it, and consequently proved that it was still remote. It is commonly said that the design of keeping it secret, is to excite us to watch and to be always prepared. This is the improvement which we should make of the fact that there is a future judgment ; but it will not seem to an accurate thinker to arise properly from the uncertainty of the time, because amidst our total ignorance of the day and the hour, we are assured, as men in past generations might have been, that it will not take place during our lives. There is a long series of prophecies which will be fulfilled before the coming of Christ, and by the details of which ages will be consumed. This may be a topic of popular declamation, but it will not bear exact inquiry. Some things in Scripture which are understood to favour the idea, relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. It may operate in this way upon the men who shall live after the prophecies are fulfilled, and who, if they rightly discern the signs of the times, may justly conclude that the end of all things is at hand. In our age, the immediate motive to vigilance and activity, is the uncertainty of the time of our death, which will be precisely the same to us in its effects as the second coming of Christ ; for after death

▪ Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xv.

is the judgment, when the state of every man will be immutably fixed.

As we have no means of ascertaining the time of the general judgment, so it is impossible to say any thing respecting its duration. It is called a day ; but the use of this term in the Scriptures is indefinite, and it marks at one time a shorter, and at another a longer period. There is no doubt that the Judge could in a moment separate the righteous from the wicked, and having then passed sentence upon them, send them immediately away to their respective abodes ; but we cannot conceive that this summary process would answer the end of the judgment, which we apprehend to be not simply the reward of the good, and the punishment of the bad, but the display of justice in particular cases. If our notion of a detailed procedure is correct, as the design of it will be to convey just ideas of the divine character to the minds of creatures, whose thoughts follow in a train, a natural day seems to us too short for the disclosure of so many secrets, the correction of so many apparent irregularities, the solution of so many perplexities, the determination of so many cases. But we speculate in ignorance, and it is wiser to rest in the general conclusion, that the business will be so conducted, as to produce in every mind, a full conviction of the consummate rectitude of the divine government.

“ Tell us, when shall these things be ? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world ? ” * This question of the disciples related to our Saviour’s prediction of the destruction of the temple, and his answer must be considered as bearing upon that point. It is a great mistake, therefore, to bring forward the circumstances enumerated by him as signs of his second coming, because they were to precede the fall of Jerusalem ; and he expressly told his disciples that the generation then existing should not pass away till all these things were fulfilled. We know of no signs but the fulfilment of prophecy. The Gospel will be preached to all nations ; antichrist will fall ; the Jews will be converted ; the millennium will succeed, or the thousand years of his spiritual reign upon earth ; and, it should seem, will be followed by a period of impiety, when the wicked will go up on the

* Matth. xxiv. 3.

breadth of the earth, to compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city.* Then the Judge will appear upon his throne; but, in the order of events, the intervals are not marked, and the whole is expressed in such figurative and general terms as to convey no definite information respecting the time. Past prophecies have been gradually, and sometimes insensibly fulfilled. We may, therefore, presume that, although those who shall live towards the end of the world, when the predictions are accomplished, may know that the end of all things is approaching, they will be as incapable as we are of calculating the time; and that, even to them, the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, suddenly, and without previous warning.

The place where the judgment will be held is this world; and as it is said that the saints shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, it should seem that the wicked will be left standing upon the earth. What region of it will be chosen for the last and solemn scene, it would be presumptuous to conjecture. The following passage in Joel has no relation to the subject: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about."† The valley of Jehoshaphat, lying between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives, is of small extent; but the scene of the last judgment will afford ample space for the countless millions who will be assembled upon it to hear their final doom. All nations shall be gathered before the Son of man. The judgment, therefore, presupposes the resurrection, of which, however, I shall not at present speak, as it will occur in another part of this course. The whole order of angels was created at once; it has received no increase, and sustained no diminution since its commencement. The human race consisted, at first, of a single pair, from whom successive generations are derived, according to the peculiar law of their nature; and as they were made subject to death in consequence of sin, they have passed along the stage of life, and after a short display, vanished from sight. It is but a small portion of mankind that is alive at any particular period. Multitudes have retired into the land of darkness and oblivion; multitudes will yet be

* Rev. xx. 9.

† Joel iii. 12.

raised up by the creating power of God, to spend their transient day in the light of the sun, and then descend into the shades of death.

When the Son of man shall be revealed in his glory, he will call upon the earth and the sea to give up their dead, and all who ever breathed the breath of life, from Adam to his last son, who, like him, returned to the dust, shall arise, and, together with those who are then alive, shall stand in their lot at the end of the days. The men of the present age will be mingled in the same crowd with the antediluvians, and with those who shall be summoned from their dwellings and their occupations by the voice of the archangel. All ranks and conditions will be confounded. Those whom birth, and office, and wealth, and talents placed at a distance from each other, will stand upon the same level; the great without their ensigns of dignity, and the poor without their marks of abasement, for then only moral distinctions will be regarded. The oppressor and the oppressed will be there, the one to obtain the redress of his wrongs, and the other to have his violence returned upon his own head. Statesmen, whose avarice or profusion impoverished nations, and whose intrigues involved them in wars; princes, who imagined that mankind were made for them; and blood-stained heroes, who acquired an illustrious name by desolating the earth, will stand before the tribunal, amidst the cries and execrations of millions whom they ruined with impunity. Jews and Gentiles, Mahometans and Christians, the learned and the unlearned, the bond and the free, the high and the low, will appear divested of all adventitious circumstances, to render an account to Him who is no respecter of persons, and whose omniscient eye will distinguish each individual in the immense throng as easily as if he were alone. Not one of the righteous shall be forgotten, and not one of the wicked shall find a hiding-place from the justice of the Judge.

The Judge is Jesus Christ, as we are informed in the passages formerly quoted. As sustaining this character, he is to be considered, not simply as the second Person of the Trinity, to whom, in common with the other persons, the government of the moral and natural world belongs, but as Mediator. His Divinity is presupposed, as we shall afterwards see; but, in

the final retribution, he will act as the Father's delegate, and exercise official power. For this statement we have his own authority: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."* The communication of power to him is expressly asserted; and the reason assigned, "because he is the Son of man," imports that it is imparted to him in his Mediatorial character to reward his humiliation and sufferings, and to qualify him to accomplish all the ends of his office. Hence, he will appear not only in his own glory, but in the glory of his Father, bearing this honourable commission which will exalt him so highly in the eyes of angels and men.

There is a manifest congruity in appointing him, who was the Saviour, to be the Judge of the human race. It was fit that the promises which he had made, and the threatenings which he had denounced, should be carried into effect by himself; that, from his hand, those who had submitted to his law should receive their reward, and those who had been disobedient, their punishment. It was fit that he should bring to a close the dispensation which he had established by his personal interposition, and should fulfil, in the eternal state, the destinies of those for whom its benefits were intended. Besides, as the judgment is appointed for the public manifestation of the righteousness of the Divine government, it was necessary that there should be a visible Judge, whose proceedings all should witness, and whose voice all should hear. The proper person, therefore, is Jesus Christ, who, having assumed our nature, will appear in it unchanged in essence, although invested with glory suitable to the dignity of his person and the high rank which it holds as the head of the creation of God. On Sinai the Israelites beheld the awful tokens of the Divine presence; but they only heard the voice of their Law-giver. When Jesus Christ comes with clouds, "every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."†

It is a man who will be revealed from heaven as the Judge of men; but that man being also the Son of God, is possessed

* John v. 22, 26, 27.

† Rev. i. 7.

of all the attributes of Divinity. These are necessary to the execution of his office. The decision of so many cases involving innumerable particulars, in themselves intricate and perplexed, and connected with other cases by multiplied aspects and relations, will manifestly require knowledge not inferior to omniscience. Who but God could distinguish every individual in this vast assembly? Who but God could remember, if I may be permitted to use this term, all the incidents of their lives? Who but God could form a just estimate of their actions, by a direct and unerring reference to the circumstances in which they were performed, and the motives from which they proceeded? Who but God could bring to light the secrets of the heart, upon which the sentence will be founded in all cases, but more particularly in those where the external conduct was a superficial shew; and where it is only by a disclosure of principles carefully concealed, that the persons will appear to be deserving of their doom? No created mind is capable of comprehending all the details of this multifarious transaction, or of attaining to the prerogative of God, who says, "I search the heart and the reins." Upon the adequate knowledge of the Judge will be founded the rectitude of his decisions. He cannot err in judgment; and besides, he is essentially just. As he loves righteousness, loves it as necessarily as he exists, so he is exposed to no influence which might counteract the dictates of equity. He is subject to no partialities; he feels not the disturbing effects of pity or anger; he proceeds calmly, but steadily, to his purpose; and every sentence which he pronounces, rests upon the immutable basis of law. Among the multitude of the condemned, however severe may be their punishment, and however impatiently they may bear it, there will not be one who will dare to accuse his Judge of injustice. In the mind of every man a consciousness of guilt will be deeply fixed; he will be compelled to blame himself alone, and to justify the sentence which has rendered him for ever miserable. The power of Jesus Christ is infinite, as well as his knowledge and his justice. The works which will signalize the great day, are operations of Omnipotence. Omnipotence only could raise the dead from their graves, bring all nations to the tribunal, however reluctant to obey the summons, cast the un-

godly into the flames of hell, and open the gates of heaven, to give admission to the righteous. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."*

Several circumstances are mentioned in Scripture, which will attend the coming of our Saviour to judgment. "Behold he cometh with clouds."† There seems to be no reason why these words should not be literally understood, as the coming is not figurative, and the manifestation of Christ will be made to the bodily eyes. When God descended to publish the law to the Israelites, there was a thick cloud upon the mountain, from which issued peals of thunder, and flashes of lightning. It may be the design of the Apostle to signify, that something similar will take place in the day of the Lord. He will be surrounded with clouds, in form, and magnitude, and dazzling splendour, corresponding to the grandeur of the occasion, and the majesty of the person who will come on them as his magnificent chariot. Among these clouds his throne will be erected. It is called in Scripture, a great white throne; and, as there will be a real representation to the senses, this may be understood to signify the appearance of a seat, on which he will sit, as human judges do, when causes are tried before them. He will be elevated above the assembly, and all eyes will be raised to him, in solemn expectation of his final award.

"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God."‡ Three sounds are distinctly mentioned, but I do not pretend to know what they are. There is probably an allusion to an important circumstance in the awful appearance of God upon Sinai: "On the third day, in the morning, there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice;"|| that is, Moses said, as we are informed by

* 2 Thess. i. 7—9. † Rev. i. 7. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 16. || Exod. xix. 16, 19.

the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "I exceedingly fear and quake."* Those will be terrible sounds, which will shake the hearts of the guilty with fear, and be a solemn prelude to that more terrible voice, which will consign them to everlasting woe. I may remark in passing, that the opinion of those who affirm, that there is no such creature as an archangel, and that under this title, our Lord himself is described, is refuted by this passage, in which the Lord is plainly distinguished from the archangel; the most blundering writer meaning to say that, in the descent of Christ, his own voice will be heard, would not have changed the designation from Lord to archangel, and thus have led his readers to think of two persons, instead of one. It is certain that the Judge will be attended by the heavenly host. He will come with his holy angels, perhaps in a visible form, who will not only increase the pomp and splendour of his appearance, and be spectators of a scene so interesting to the whole intelligent creation, but will have high and honourable offices to perform, both to the righteous and to the wicked. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." These are the tares growing in the field of the world; but the wheat shall be also gathered into the barn by the same ministry, and "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father."†

The saints being caught up into the clouds, by the ministry of the angels, to meet the Lord in the air, and the wicked being left upon the earth, the judgment will proceed. Into the details we cannot enter, because our information is very general, and some things are expressed in figurative language. It is evidently the design of the following passage to teach us, that an exact inquiry will be made, and the judgment will be conducted with a strict regard to justice. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."‡ No person can suppose that books will be literally

* Heb. xii. 21.

† Matt. xiii. 41, 43.

‡ Rev. xx. 12.

used on this occasion. The books, therefore, seem to signify the different laws under which men have been placed, and by which justice requires that they should be tried : and the correctness of this idea may be inferred from the statement, that they will be “judged out of the books, according to their works ;” importing that there will be a comparison of their actions with a standard, and that the sentence will be founded upon the result.

First, Those who were not favoured with divine revelation, will be judged by the law of nature, or the law originally given to man as the rule of his conduct. Some portion of this law has been preserved among the Gentiles, partly by reason and partly by tradition ; and although the traces of it are in some instances obliterated, and in others obscured, yet so much remains as to render them accountable beings, and to be the foundation of a judicial trial. Men have not lost all sense of justice, of truth, of humanity, of the duties arising from the various relations which they bear to one another. The Apostle Paul refers to their knowledge of morality, in these words : “When the Gentiles which have not the law,” that is, the law in writing as the Jews had, “do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.” * How far their ignorance will exempt them from responsibility, is a question of some difficulty, which is rashly decided when ignorance is pronounced to be a complete excuse. If the ancient Gentiles become so vain in their imaginations as to worship the creature instead of the Creator, and so blind in moral distinctions as to account gross sensuality no crime, and to practise unnatural lusts without a blush, does it follow that their idolatry and abandoned profligacy were not sins ? To this conclusion the plea set up by some men in behalf of ignorance would lead us, but it receives no countenance from Scripture, which speaks of the conduct of those Gentiles in the strongest terms of reprobation. Ignorance may procure an alleviation of punishment, but unless absolutely invincible will not entitle any man to

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

exemption from it. I have no doubt however, that if we should fix the standard for the Gentiles by what they actually knew, not one of them would escape condemnation ; not even their most celebrated teachers of morality, who were accused in their own time of indulging the vices against which they loudly declaimed. “ As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.” *

Secondly, The Jews will be judged by the law of Moses and the prophets, which placed them in much more favourable circumstances than the Gentiles, for the knowledge of their duty ; and vain will be their boast of the law, if they are at last found to be transgressors. “ As many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” † They are the servants who knew their master’s will ; and if they neglected to do it, they shall be beaten with many stripes.”

Thirdly, Christians in general will be judged by the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and will be subjected to a heavier doom than either Heathens or Jews, in consequence of their superior privileges. The ignorance of individuals will not excuse them, because they might have known their duty in all its details ; and equally unavailing will be the usual pleas of the infirmity of human nature, and the strength of temptation. In revelation there is every enforcement of duty which is fitted to operate upon the reason and conscience of intelligent beings ; and the means are provided by which the guilty may obtain the favour of God, and the weak may be enabled to perform acceptable service. “ This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” ‡

Lastly, The saints will be judged out of the book of life, which some understand to be the decree of God appointing them to salvation ; but it seems rather to be the gospel, or the law of faith, which says, “ He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.” || On comparing their exercise and conduct with this law, it will be found that they are believers, and consequently that they have a claim to the glorious recompense promised to faith. Their title will be made manifest by their works, for according to their works

* Rom. ii. 12.

† Ib.

‡ John iii. 19.

|| Mark xvi. 16.

all the dead will be judged. They will be produced as evidences of the genuineness of their faith; and it is on this ground that our Lord represents himself as saying to them, "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat." "I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." I shall afterwards have an opportunity to consider more fully the judgment as it respects the righteous, and shall therefore pass over at present some important particulars.

The declaration of the Judge concerning those on his right hand that they are righteous, and concerning those on his left hand that they are wicked, will be sufficient to convince all in the immense assembly, that the sentence pronounced upon each individual is just. There will be no need of witnesses as in human courts, because the Judge is omniscient and unerring in his decisions. There will be a testimony to their rectitude, as it respects himself, in the bosom of every man. All his past actions will be recalled, and with all their circumstances will pass before his mind in rapid succession; his conscience will then be faithful, and it will re-echo the voice of the Judge, and draw from every tongue an acknowledgment that he is "a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed."

When the investigation is finished, and every man is prepared to hear his doom, the Judge will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:" And to those on his left, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."* The execution of these sentences will take place in an inverse order, if we are to understand the following words, as stating the succession of events: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."† The wicked will be driven from the place of judgment, by the power of the Judge and the ministry of angels; while the saints will witness this awful display of justice and wrath, and then, in the train of the Redeemer, enter into the mansions of glory. As I shall have another opportunity to direct your attention to the state of the righteous in the world to come, I shall reserve till then the remarks which may be made upon this interesting subject.

* Matth. xxv. 34, 41.

† Ib. 46.

The punishment of the wicked will consist, in the first place, in being driven from the presence of Christ, which will be a far heavier doom than to be excluded for ever from the light of the sun. It is to be deprived of happiness and of hope. Whatever connexion may have subsisted between him and them in this world, where many of them were members of his church, he will hold no more intercourse with them : “ I know you not, ye workers of iniquity.” It is represented, in the second place, as punishment by fire ; but it is doubtful whether this ought to be literally understood. It is certain that another description of their doom admits of a figurative explanation,—when it is said that their worm shall never die ; and as the worm and the fire are coupled together, the same mode of interpretation may be applied to both. The design probably is, by this terrible image, to give us an idea of the excruciating nature of the sufferings which they will endure in body and soul. It is a punishment in which they will be associated with the devil and his angels. The place was prepared for those apostate spirits, and will be the common receptacle of them and of wicked men, who joined the standard of revolt which they raised against the government of God. Throughout the whole extent of his mighty empire, purity and bliss will prevail, except one dark and remote region, the prison of the universe, the accursed spot to which rebels and outcasts are exiled. In a word, it will be everlasting punishment. By some, its eternity is denied ; and their hypothesis is maintained by a train of reasoning founded on ignorance and presumption, and by violent perversion of Scripture. To every man who reads his Bible with attention and submission of mind, their arguing proves nothing but the earnestness of their wishes to obscure the evidence of truth. They would have it that future punishment is temporary, and therefore it must be so. The same word is used by our Lord to express the duration of the life of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked ; and if the one is eternal, so must be the other.

Time having run its course, eternity will commence. The earth, on which men were appointed to act the preparatory part, will pass away, or be changed, for the precise import of the passages which relate to this subject is doubtful.

This chosen theatre of the moral administration of God towards the human race, seems to be no longer wanted, when all his designs are accomplished. The event is announced in terms suitable to its grandeur, which awaken in the mind an indistinct but awful idea of a tremendous display of almighty power. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.”* The impression which the breaking up of the present system should make upon us, is at the same time pointed out, and a prospect is opened to us of a new order of things, of a regenerated system, of an earth which will never be polluted by sin, and of heavens whose brightness no clouds will obscure, and whose serenity no storms will disturb. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”†

“The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.”‡ I have said nothing respecting them, because the Scripture has furnished us with no details. They will then be deprived of their present liberty, and shut up for ever in Tartarus. Their punishment will be augmented, and the end of the world is the time of torment, to which they now look forward with dread. “Art thou come to torment us before the time?” §

* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

† Ib. 11—13.

‡ Jude 6.

§ Matth. viii. 29.

LECTURE LXIV.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

THE KINGDOM CONFERRED ON THE MEDIATOR.—DISTINGUISHED FROM CHRIST'S NATURAL KINGDOM.—IN WHAT NATURE HE ADMINISTERS ITS AFFAIRS.—ITS UNIVERSALITY.—VIEW OF IT IN REFERENCE TO THE CHURCH.—INQUIRY INTO THE DURATION OF THE MEDIATORIAL KINGDOM AND OFFICE.

HAVING seen that our Lord, after his resurrection, ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God, let us inquire into the nature of the kingdom which was conferred upon him. Before he left the world, he said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." * David thus addressed him, by the Spirit of prophecy, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." † His kingdom is expressly mentioned in this passage; and it is described by the usual ensigns of royalty, a throne, on which the Monarch sits, and a sceptre, which he holds in his hand as an emblem of authority. The design of the sacred writer in using these figures—for in the present case the words cannot be literally understood—is to lead our thoughts to the thing signified by them, the Sovereign Dominion of Christ.

It is his mediatorial kingdom of which I am at present speaking, or the kingdom which belongs to him, considered not simply as the Son of God, but as Mediator. Upon due

* Matth. xxviii. 18.

† Ps. xlv. 6, 7.

attention to the words already quoted, and others of a similar import, it appears to be a kingdom given to him, a kingdom to which he was anointed, a kingdom held by gift and delegation from God his God, or the Father, who engaged in the eternal covenant to reward his obedience with the empire of the Universe. As the Son of God, he does not reign by gift or delegation, but by original right; for, being the Creator of all things, he is by necessary consequence their Governor, possessing absolute authority over his own works, a power to continue, to change, to annihilate them according to his pleasure, and for the manifestation of his glory. Creatures are essentially dependent upon him who made them, for the act of creation gave them being, but did not render them self-existent; and this truth will be evident whether we consider them as inanimate, or as endowed with life and activity. As matter is known from experience to be inert, incapable of changing its state, the movements and arrangements which we observe in the material system, must be attributed to an external cause, namely, the power of its Author. Living beings, and particularly men, who are possessed of understanding and will, often act capriciously and perversely, so that no steady plan could be pursued, no design worthy of his Maker could be accomplished, if he did not constantly interpose to restrain them within certain bounds, and to over-rule their actions to an end very different from that which they contemplate. “He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” * “He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of it he restraineth.” † Such is the natural government of the Son of God over the works of his hands, visible and invisible, on earth and in heaven.

His mediatorial kingdom is not different in respect, if I may speak so, of its territory and its subjects. When we say that he received a kingdom from the Father, we do not compare him to an earthly monarch, who, reigning over one country by original right, acquires dominion over another by inheritance or by conquest. A new kingdom in this sense was impossible, for where should it have been found, since already every region of space acknowledged his sway? In

* Dan. iv. 35.

† Ps. lxxvi. 10.

order to prevent confusion of ideas, and to avoid perplexing ourselves with the inquiry, how Jesus Christ could receive a kingdom, if he was from the beginning Lord of all, we have only to consider his mediatorial kingdom as being his original kingdom invested with a new form, wearing a new aspect, administered for a new end. The proper view of the subject is this : that our Saviour being, as Mediator, the servant of the Father, was authorised by him to conduct, in subservience to the design of his office, the affairs of the universe, which had always been under his direction. Strictly, his investiture with a kingdom was his investiture with a right to exert the power which he had always possessed, for a specific purpose, namely, the salvation of the Church ; and it may be imperfectly illustrated by supposing a son, who was conjoined with his father in the kingdom, to begin by his consent a new system of administration, with a view to the good of his subjects. In this case his power would not be augmented, but it would be exerted in a different series of operations. In consequence of his advancement to this kingdom, the Mediator makes all things directly or indirectly, by a more remote or a nearer influence, work together for the establishment, the trial, the purification, the increase, the final triumph and perfection of that select society, which he redeemed with his blood, and which is placed under his immediate care. He is "head over all things to the church which is his body." * Hence we perceive that they err, who confine his mediatorial kingdom to the church, not considering that, while it is the chief object of his attention, the whole system of things is so managed as to be subservient to its interests ; in the same way as, by the constitution of nature, the earth, with its mountains and vallies, its springs and rivers, and various productions, was designed to minister to man. "All things are yours ; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. †

In consequence of this constitution, the course of events is changed, not sensibly, but in respect of the influence which they exert, and the point in which they will terminate. While the providence of our exalted Redeemer extends its

* Eph. i. 22, 23.

† 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.

vigilance and care to every being and every occurrence, there is one design which is contemplated and pursued amidst the ever-varying scenes of the world. There is a plan within a plan; and that which is least considered, and by many is entirely overlooked, is first in his intention, and will be most glorious in its completion. When this plan is finished, the complicated machinery by which it was carried on will be demolished; the succession of generations will stop; the frame of society will be dissolved; and the heavens and the earth which now are, will be annihilated or changed. Jesus Christ reigns as the King of his church; and that he may afford all the protection and advantage to his people which they need and expect, he is also King of the world. Empires rise and fall, individuals are born and die, the Gospel visits one country and retires from another, under his superintendence and agency. Angels descend from their bright abodes to minister to the heirs of salvation, and grace falls gently like the dew upon the souls of his people, to prepare them for a more perfect state. As a King, he distributes royal gifts: "Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." * To his kingdom, as it respects the church, your attention will be afterwards more particularly directed.

The mediatorial kingdom is administered by our incarnate Redeemer. This is a view of the subject, which demands particular attention. The kingdom is administered by Jesus Christ considered, not simply as a divine person, but as a divine person united to human nature, which shares in the dignity and glory of his state of exaltation. Human nature was the organ by which he manifested his love to our race. Having assumed it, he humbled himself, endured the contradiction of sinners and the evils of life, and submitted to the ignominious death of the cross. May we not conceive that our nature is the organ, by which he manifests the glory which the Father has conferred upon him, as the reward of his voluntary and meritorious sufferings? Let me not be understood to insinuate, that it is now endowed with divine perfections. I know that, as it is a created nature, its powers must always

* Acts ii. 33.

be comparatively limited, although enlarged beyond calculation, so as to leave the loftiest angel at an inconceivable distance. It is in human nature that he is contemplated and acknowledged by angels and men in heaven, as the Lord of all worlds. In the symbolical descriptions of his exaltation, he appears as "a lamb that had been slain," that is, in his assumed nature, which alone was capable of suffering and dying, and is hailed by the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand around the throne, and by a chorus of praise from every part of the creation. According to the Psalmist, it is man whom God "has crowned with glory and honour;" it is man whom he has "set over the works of his hands;" it is under the feet of man that he has put the "fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." * . From the commentary of an Apostle, we learn, that these things are spoken of our Saviour. † It is by man that the last and solemn act of the divine government will be performed, when the millions of mankind shall be assembled before the tribunal, and judged according to their works. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." ‡

Revelation unfolds to our wondering eyes, a view of the state of the universe altogether new. The conclusion to which reason conducts us, is, that He who created all things, upholds them by his power, and guides them by his wisdom. This conclusion is not contradicted, but rather is confirmed by the Scriptures, which throw new light upon this as well as other truths which were formerly known, and extricate it from the obscurity and perplexity in which it was involved by the speculations of science falsely so called. We still say that men and angels, beings visible and invisible, animate and inanimate, are sustained by the almighty arm which gave them existence, and are subject to its control. But instructed in the personal distinctions of the Godhead, which unaided rea-

* Ps. viii. 4.

† Heb. ii. 6.

‡ John v. 26—29.

son could not have discovered, we learn that the administration of universal nature is the peculiar province of Him, who on the ground of a mysterious relation is called the Son; and that he exercises this high office in human nature, which by an act equally mysterious he has made his own. To this wonderful fact we reverently give our assent; but perhaps it is not so often, and so distinctly present to our minds as it ought to be, when its importance is considered; and we are apt to forget, when we are surveying the diversified scenes of creation, that every movement is effected by him who died upon the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins. What an interesting thought, that heaven and earth are obedient to the voice of one who is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and who retains amidst his glory the feelings of a friend and brother! What honour has God conferred upon our nature, by setting it far above all principalities, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, both in this world and that which is to come. It was this instance of the divine goodness, which excited the admiration and gratitude of the holy Psalmist, when, contemplating the heavens, he burst out into this devout exclamation, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man that thou visitest him?" * This is the true system of the Universe, full of consolation and hope to believers, although philosophers may be ignorant of it, or may treat it with scorn. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." †

I have already said, that the mediatorial kingdom of Christ is a gift of the Father, and properly ought to be considered as the recompense of his humiliation and sufferings. This connexion is stated in the following passage, which at the same time gives a sublime view of the exalted state of our Redeemer, and shews the unlimited extent of his dominions. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he

* Ps. viii. 4.

† Ps. xcvi. 1, 2.

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* It appears from this and other passages, that nothing is exempt from his authority. He gives law to matter, and to the irrational tribes; he commands the armies of heaven; he claims the inhabitants of the earth as his subjects; he rules over the spirits of darkness; he is the Lord of the dead and of the living. But it is not necessary to our present purpose to take a minute survey of his mediatorial kingdom in all its extent. Let us view it in relation to the church, which is the peculiar object of his care, and for the sake of which all power in heaven and on earth was given to him. The proper object of his mediatorial kingdom is the church, although it embraces many other things; the world engages his attention, no farther than as it is subservient to the present good and final salvation of the church: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion."†

I remark, in the first place, That, having ascended to heaven, and sat down at the right hand of the Father, he founded the church by the ministry of his Apostles. During his personal ministry, he announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The disciples, embued with Jewish prejudices, asked, after his resurrection, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"‡ dreaming of a temporal monarchy. It commenced on the day of Pentecost, when he poured out the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, to qualify them for the work of preaching the Gospel, and erecting the church. Peter, referring to what they had witnessed, called upon the Jews to consider it as a proof of the great authority with which our Redeemer was invested: "He being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."§ Having vanquished on

* Phil. ii. 5—11. † Ps. ii. 6. ‡ Acts i. 6. § Ib. ii. 33—36.

the cross the god of this world, he proceeded to rescue from his power unhappy men whom he had long held in bondage, and to make them the subjects of his own kingdom. The difficulties with which the enterprise of the Apostles was attended, were many and formidable; sufficient, it might have been thought, to render their endeavours abortive. There never was an undertaking, the failure of which might have been more confidently predicted. Were twelve fishermen to convert the world to a religion repugnant to their former notions, and habits, and tastes, and to unite the most hostile sects in one society of love? What folly in uneducated men to make an attempt which would have been too arduous for the learned and the eloquent! Yet they did succeed; and Christianity obtained such an interest in the minds and affections of thousands, as paved the way for its subsequent diffusion over a considerable part of the earth. Jews and Gentiles were brought together in holy fellowship; and a community of faith, and worship, and interest, was established among men of different countries and languages. The design of employing instruments so inadequate, in respect of natural talents and accomplishments, was to illustrate the power of Jesus Christ, and to shew that he is the Author of the second as well as of the first creation. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."* The first act of royal authority which he performed after ascending his throne, was to establish his kingdom upon earth; and the means corresponded to its nature. It is a spiritual kingdom; and was not erected by force of arms, but by the persuasive influence of the truth, and the invisible operations of grace. "He shall come down as rain on the mown grass, and as showers that water the earth."† The kingdom of heaven came not with observation, with noise and external pomp; but its progress was silent and gradual, and was illustrated by the apt similitude of seed cast into the ground, which springs and grows up, a man knows not how. On the day of Pentecost, a train of events commenced, which will ultimately realize the vision and the prophecy. A stone, cut out without hands, brake in pieces the image which Ne-

* Ps. cx. 2.

† Ib. lxxii. 6.

buchadnezzar saw ; and it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. This is the interpretation :—" In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." *

In the second place, He prescribed the form and order of his church, enacting laws and ordinances to be observed in it, and claiming absolute authority over the souls and consciences of the members. Before he ascended to heaven—for even then he possessed regal power, although he had not been formally invested with it—he appointed baptism and the sacred Supper, and commanded the Gospel to be preached ; and afterwards he enabled the Apostles, by the Spirit of wisdom, to arrange all the parts of the system. The church is a voluntary society in this sense, that no person is compelled by force to enter into it, and he only is a genuine member who has joined it from conviction and choice ; but there is this important difference between it and other voluntary societies, that the members have no right to settle the terms of their union, but must implicitly submit to its original constitution. Strictly human legislation has no place here ; the proper province of the rulers is to execute the laws already made by the Sovereign ; their decrees possess only subordinate authority, and are not binding except as they are declarative of his will. " One is our Master, even Christ." " He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." † The duty of the church is to submit to his authority ; and it is not performed unless his word be received as the only rule of faith and practice, and every thing which is done in religion be exactly conformable to his commands. In the world, his law may be disregarded and violated ; but it should be held sacred in the church, which is his kingdom. In the exercise of his authority, he abrogated the law of Moses, which had been binding for fifteen hundred years, and was fondly supposed by the Jews to be of perpetual obligation. He published a new and spiritual law, which will continue in force till the end of time ; he removed the Priests and Levites from the altar, and established in their room Apostles, Prophets, Evan-

* Dan. ii. 44.

† Matth. xxiii. 8. Ps. xlv. 11.

gelists, Pastors, and Teachers; he changed the nature of the society, by associating the Gentiles with the Jews; he made all places sacred as well as Jerusalem, and ordained that, from the rising to the setting of the sun, incense should be offered to his name, and a pure offering. As soon as he had announced to his disciples that all power was given to him in heaven and in earth, he said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."*

The authority of Jesus Christ over the church, is exclusive of the authority of man. Councils may be assembled to declare the truth, and condemn heresies, but they can make no new article of faith; they may regulate subordinate matters, the determination of which lies within the sphere of experience and prudence; but they can neither increase nor diminish the sum of our moral obligations. The supremacy claimed by the Pope, is an invasion of the royal prerogative of Christ, although he calls himself his vicar, or substitute. He has intruded into this office, and assumes a paramount power; pretending to forgive sins, changing the ordinances, and repealing the laws of heaven, and extending his jurisdiction over the visible and the invisible world. "He exalts himself above all that is called God, and is worshipped; and, as God, he sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." Hence, instead of being the vicar of Christ, he is justly called Antichrist, his rival and antagonist, who has usurped dominion over the church, and supplanted the authority of its only lawful Head by his own. The connexion between Church and State has been generally, and, as some think, uniformly productive of the same evil, in a greater or a less degree. The alliance is formed on this principle, that the Church shall yield something in return for the favour and protection of the State. Without entering upon the question respecting the lawfulness of Civil Establishments, I content myself with remarking, that, if an earthly sovereign is constituted Head of the Church, and its affairs are conducted according to Acts of Parliament, a foreign power is admitted,

* Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

which, to a certain extent, secularizes his kingdom, and intrenches upon his paramount authority.

The form of the church, under the present dispensation, is not delineated with the same minuteness which we observe in the law of Moses. There every thing is prescribed, the place, and the times, and the ministers of worship, the oblations to be presented, and the rites to be performed in public and in private; nothing is left to human discretion. The New Testament furnishes only an outline, or general principles deduced from occasional hints, and the example of the primitive times. We are fully satisfied with the constitution of our own Church, as agreeable to the Scriptural model; but, finding that wise and good men adopt different views, and are equally confident that they are conformable to the apostolical standard, we should beware of contending about the subject with the vehemence and bitterness of zeal, which it has too often elicited; and should cultivate charitable sentiments towards those who hold the same faith, although they do not, in all things, walk according to the same rule. Above all, let us guard against the narrow, unchristian idea, that we alone are the true Church, and consequently, that the kingdom of Christ is confined to our little society. All belong to it, who sincerely acknowledge him as their Lord, and are willing to be guided by his word; mistakes about inferior points, and occasional deviations, through ignorance, from the rule which he has prescribed, will not hinder them from being owned as faithful subjects. The kingdom of Christ is catholic. As it is universal by right, so it comprehends within its boundaries all who believe and obey the truth, however diversified by external profession. Some of them may be found even in that pretended Church, which is in reality a synagogue of Satan, although it is not easy to conceive how they can retain their allegiance to Christ within the dominions of his adversary; but it is supposed that a remnant will be left there to the last; for immediately before the fall of the mystical Babylon, this warning is given: "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues; for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."*

* Rev. xviii. 4, 5.

In the third place, He upholds the church throughout all generations, by a constant succession of members. The great promise of eternal life, which he has made to his followers, will be performed in another world; their interest in his salvation secures them against the sting of death, but not against death itself; each in his order, when he has completed his term of obedience and trial, lies down in the grave. When we observe the havock which is daily made among the ranks of his disciples, and see those, who professed the truth, and evinced their sincerity by the stedfastness of their faith and the devoted zeal with which they served him, removed, one after another, into the house of silence where there is no work, or wisdom, or device, we might be tempted to prognosticate the most gloomy result; and we naturally exclaim, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men." But, while the individuals perish, the race remains: *genus immortale manet*. "Instead of the fathers, he takes the children;" the places of those who have fallen, are supplied by their own families, and more frequently by strangers; and thus his promise is fulfilled, that the gates of hell, of *ἀδης*, the invisible world, into which the souls of the departed enter, and the grave, which may be considered as its portal, shall not prevail against the church. In fulfilling this promise, several acts of his royal authority and power are exerted. Having received from his Father, after his ascension, the gifts of the Spirit, he bestows them upon those persons whom he is pleased to employ, to qualify them for preaching the Gospel, which is the grand means of gathering subjects into his kingdom of grace, or, in the words of an Apostle, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* Papists, and some Protestants, boast of the regular succession of their clergy from the Apostles; but the latter must acknowledge that, as the Church of Rome was the medium of communication, it is a very corrupt channel in which power has been conveyed to them. This we know, that, in every

* Eph. iv. 12, 13.

age, men have been found, who willingly consecrated themselves to this service, and their labours have been crowned with a blessing. Notwithstanding the opposition which it may encounter, he preserves the Gospel in a particular place, till all the elect there are converted ; and he sends it into any country, where he has designs of mercy to accomplish, in spite of the efforts of men and devils to exclude it. The power of Rome, which had conquered the world, could not hinder the propagation and triumph of the truth ; and the obstacles to its entrance, or its progress, in India, in China, in Turkey, will give way, when the time to favour those regions is come. The words of God respecting the temple, are equally applicable to the opposition with which the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah has to contend : “ Who art thou, O great mountain ? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain : and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”* He exerts a secret power upon the heart, which the strongest prejudices and the most inveterate habits of sin are not able to resist. As the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, his servants do not fight for him ; and it is only in a figure that the church is represented as “ terrible, like an army with banners.” Our religion forbids the employment of external force in its propagation and defence, and leaves it to Antichrist, who, in the want of arguments, has recourse to the sword, and terrifies into compliance those whom he has failed to persuade. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but they are not therefore ineffectual. They are mighty, through God, to pull down the strongholds of sin, to cast down lofty imaginations, and to bring every thought into captivity to Christ. There is no man who may not become a subject of this kingdom. However remote he may now be from this character, however hostile may be his sentiments and feelings, he may undergo a change as sudden and wonderful as that of Paul, who, from being a persecutor, became an Apostle, and a preacher of the faith which once he destroyed. The grace of our exalted Redeemer operates silently, but surely ; it always gains its end ; and there are daily added to the church such as shall be saved. “ All they that be fat upon earth, shall eat and

* Zech. iv. 7.

worship : all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him ; and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him ; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this."*

In the fourth place, He defends the church against her enemies. These may be considered as invisible and visible. By the former, we mean the spirits of darkness, who have a kingdom of their own to maintain, the overthrow of which will be the sure consequence of the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. Besides the efforts which they make, by the instrumentality of men who too readily concur with them, they labour immediately to accomplish their designs, by temptations so contrived as to disquiet the faith of Christians, and allure them into the paths of sin. How they are fitted for the conflict, and by what means, although the struggle be severe and injuries be sometimes sustained, they prove ultimately victorious, we learn from the following exhortation : " Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."† The truth, couched under this figurative language, is, that grace is communicated to believers, by which, if skilfully and actively employed, they shall render abortive the attempts of their spiritual adversaries. The power by which they conquer, is not their own, but the power of Jesus Christ, and to him the glory of the victory is due. The visible enemies of the Church are ungodly men, and especially such of them as are possessed of secular authority, or can boast of talents and learning, who, in many instances, have united to arrest the progress of the truth by the terrors of the sword, and to bring it into discredit by argument, misrepresentation, and ridicule. Hitherto they have not prevailed ; and experience shows us, as well as the

* Ps. xxii. 29—31.

† Eph. vi. 13—16.

word of God, that we have nothing to fear from the greatest efforts which they may yet make. The repeated persecutions to which the Church was subjected in the first three centuries, are recorded in history. Every thing was done by the combined wisdom and power of the Roman empire, to crush the rising religion ; and hopes were entertained and expressed, that the Christian superstition, so it was called, would be extirpated from the earth. But it emerged from the scene of suffering and blood, with increased stature and renovated strength, still contending with paganism for the victory ; and the struggle was closed by the conversion of Constantine, who planted the cross upon the capitol of Rome. We have heard of the dreadful conflict which the church had to sustain with the antichristian power, of the cruelties which were inflicted upon the friends of truth, and the torrents of blood which were shed ; and how the faithful were driven into obscure retreats, and compelled for a long season to "prophesy in sackcloth." But at the Reformation, the church rose from her ashes more glorious than ever. Now, what has protected the feeble ? what has given power to the faint ? what has enabled the minority to maintain a contest so alarming to flesh and blood, and in which no human glory would be gained ? It was the grace of Jesus Christ which supported the faith and patience of his followers ; it was his Providence which counteracted the designs of their enemies, and marked the boundary beyond which their violence should not pass. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them ; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* This is the declaration of him who sits at the right hand of the Father : "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment, thou shalt condemn."† The adversaries of Zion have successively fallen, and, if their memorial has not perished from the earth, their names are branded with infamy ; but the church has survived the revolutions of empire, and will continue a monument of the power and love of her exalted Head, till he shall appear in the clouds of heaven, to terminate the warfare, and to receive his people into his eternal kingdom. "He must reign, till all his enemies be put under his feet."‡

* 1 John iv. 4.

† Isa. liv. 17.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

Having taken a view of the Mediatorial kingdom of Christ upon earth, chiefly in its relation to the church, I observe, in the last place, that he reigns in the kingdom of glory. He is the Lord of the invisible, as well as of the visible world, and nothing is done in either but according to his will. Heaven was purchased with his blood, and it is fit that to him should be committed the uncontrolled disposal of its glories and joys. He ascended to take possession of it as the reward due to his obedience and death, and to prepare it for his followers. Seated upon the throne, he sways the sceptre of universal dominion, and wears a crown which will never fade away. Upon earth his right to rule is disputed, and his authority is resisted by men of corrupt minds, who do not choose to submit their licentious liberty to the restraints of his law; but, in heaven, every tongue acknowledges him to be Lord, and every heart rejoices to obey him. To him it belongs to admit into the kingdom of glory, or to exclude from it; for he opens, and no man can shut; he shuts, and no man can open. When the saints die, he receives their spirits into the mansions of rest, and assigns his place to each individual; for the rank which they hold, and the degree of felicity which they enjoy, are apportioned by his wisdom and love. Accordingly, they are represented as prostrating themselves, and casting down their crowns, in humble acknowledgment that they hold them as the gifts of his bounty, not as the reward of their personal merit, or of the services which they performed to him upon earth: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power." * The angels join with them in adoration and homage: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." † We know little of the invisible state; the revelation is partial, and the notices are obscure; but we are assured that it is under the administration of our Saviour, and that its inhabitants are happy under his care. His glory will not be always concealed. At the destined hour, he will appear in the clouds, and display his power in pronouncing sentence upon the assembled human race; and every knee shall bow before him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord.

* Rev. iv. 11.

† Ib. v. 12.

There is a passage which is confessedly obscure, and has exercised the diligence of commentators, upon which, on account of its close connexion with the present subject, it will be proper to bestow some observations: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." *

It is evident that nothing in this passage can be understood to import, that the time will come when the Son, considered as the second Person of the Trinity, shall be reduced to a state of inferiority to the Father. If he is at present equal, the equality will ever continue, because it is not founded on favour or temporary arrangement, but on the possession of the same essence and the same infinite perfections. Between persons to whom the same nature belongs, there may be a distinction of order, but there can be no difference of rank and dignity. In what sense, then, is it said that the Son himself shall be subject to the Father?

In order to obtain some light upon this point, it is necessary to refer to what is said before: "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The words in the one place serve to explain those in the other; for what is first called the delivering up of the kingdom to the Father, is afterwards expressed by the subjection of the Son to him.

The kingdom which he will deliver up to the Father, is not the kingdom pertaining to him as a Divine person having an original and indefeasible right to govern his own works, to reign over his own creation. This dominion is founded in the relation between him and his creatures, and could be conceived to cease only by their ceasing to exist. While they continue to be, he cannot be divested of his authority either by the authority of another, or by his own voluntary act; not by the authority of another, because he has no superior; not by his

* 1 Cor. xv. 24—26, 28.

own act, because he could not renounce the essential prerogative of Godhead.

We have seen that there is another kingdom which he possesses by gift, and which was conferred upon him for a particular purpose, namely, that by his power he might accomplish the design of his death upon the cross, in the conversion and final salvation of his people. He rules, if I may speak so, in the Father's place, and by delegated authority; and this arrangement is founded on their mutual counsels for the redemption of the church. To the eye of faith, guided in its researches into the economy of the universe by the light of revelation, Jesus Christ appears seated upon the throne, and exercising his mighty sway over all its provinces.

From this view of the Mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is evident that the purpose for which it was established was temporary. Hence we perceive what may be understood to be the meaning of "delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father." The kingdom will end when its design is accomplished; he will cease to exercise an authority which has no longer an object. When all the elect are converted by the truth, and, being collected into one body, are presented to the Father a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; when idolatry, superstition, and heresy are overthrown, and all evil is expelled from the kingdom of God; when the plans and efforts of wicked spirits are defeated, and they are shut up in their prison, from which there is no escape; when death has yielded up his spoils, and laid his sceptre at the feet of his Conqueror; when the grand assize has been held, his impartial sentence has pronounced the doom of the human race, and their everlasting abodes are allotted to the righteous and the ungodly, nothing will remain to be done by the power with which our Saviour was invested at his ascension; and his work being finished, his commission will expire.

On this subject we cannot speak with certainty, and are in great danger of error, because the event is future, and our information is imperfect. Here analogy fails, and the utmost caution is necessary in borrowing an illustration from human affairs; but, without insinuating that the two cases are exactly similar, may we not say that, as a regent or vicegerent of a king, to whom the royal authority has been intrusted for a

time, resigns it at the close, and the Sovereign himself resumes the reins of government; so our Redeemer, who now sways the sceptre of the universe, will return his delegated power to him from whom he received it, and a new order of things will commence, under which the dependence of men upon the Godhead will be immediate; and Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one in essence, counsel, and operation, will reign for ever over the inhabitants of heaven. This is the probable meaning of the words, "Then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that put all things under him."

It may be objected, that what has been now said concerning the termination of the Mediatorial kingdom of Christ, is contrary to those passages of Scripture which represent it as an everlasting kingdom. But, although the objection is worthy of attention, it is not unanswerable. The terms *everlasting* and *for ever* do not always import absolute eternity, but sometimes signify only a long duration. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called "statutes for ever," although they have for centuries been abolished, because they were to continue throughout all the generations of Israel. The kingdom of the Messiah is contrasted with the kingdoms of men; and in the book of Daniel, where the epithet everlasting is applied to it, it is opposed to the four great monarchies of ancient times, and notice is given that, while they should disappear in succession, it would survive all civil commotions and political changes, and be commensurate with the world itself. It will not cease till the frame of nature is dissolved, and then it will merge in the eternal kingdom of God. The glory of having once possessed this kingdom, and administered it with wisdom and righteousness, will ever remain to him, and will call forth a tribute of praise from the countless myriads of his subjects.

Perhaps the words of the Apostle may be understood to import the termination not only of the mediatorial kingdom, but of the mediatorial office, for he says, that the Son will be subject to the Father, that "God may be all in all;" that a new mode of intercourse with the divine nature may commence, and the communion may be immediate and complete.

In the present state, we have not immediate access to the Father; our fellowship is carried on through the mediation of

the Son. Even after men have been reconciled to him, the interposition of a third person is necessary, that the friendship may not be broken by their daily transgressions, and that the purity of his nature may be unsullied by his intercourse with the frail and guilty children of the dust. Hence it was necessary, that Jesus Christ should continue a Priest after he had died upon the cross, and should enter into heaven with his own blood, to make intercession for us. When the present dispensation has come to an end, this necessity will no longer exist. The design of the mediation of Christ, was to bring men back to God, by sacrifice and intercession. It is accomplished, when pardoned, purified, and translated from earth to heaven, they are so holy that their Maker can look with unqualified approbation upon his own work, and as in the beginning, pronounce it to be good. May we not, therefore, conceive the mediation to terminate like any other plan, in the execution of which the intention of the contriver has been fulfilled? Why should intercession continue, when there are no sins to be forgiven, and no wants to be supplied, and when the objects of redeeming love are established in a state of perfection beyond the possibility of failure?

It will still be true, that Jesus Christ did once sustain, and gloriously execute, the high office of Mediator between God and man. He will still be the object of the love, and gratitude, and praise of the saints. He will still shine as the sun of the celestial world. The millions of the redeemed around the throne will still be the monuments of his triumph. The exercise of his office will cease for the most honourable of all reasons, because its end has been fully gained; but the glory of it will be for ever celebrated in the songs of the blessed: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

What has now been said, is proposed solely as a probable opinion; it would be presumptuous to speak confidently upon a subject so obscure. There are some passages of Scripture which seem to militate against the idea of the termination of the mediatorial office of our Saviour. His continued agency in this character, may be inferred from the declaration, that the Lamb will be the light of the heavenly city.* But the apparent discrepance will be removed by conceding, as we

* Rev. xxi. 23.

most willingly do, that he will retain all the honours due to him as the person who achieved the redemption of the church ; and that the great manifestation of the divine glory which will engage the attention of the saints, will be that which is made in him as the incarnate Son and servant of the Father.

Again it is said, that “ the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ;” * and hence it may be inferred, that he will continue the exercise of his office as the medium through which the happiness of the saints will be communicated. But the words admit of an interpretation in perfect unison with our doctrine ; for the felicity of the world to come will be the exclusive effect of his mediation, and it will be owing solely to him, that they who were reconciled to God upon earth, have immediate access to his throne, and know even as they are known.

Once more, it is said of him as Mediator, that he ever liveth to make intercession. † But the word *for ever*, as we have already said, does not always denote eternity, for the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation are called statutes for ever, although they were abolished by the death of Christ. The passage now quoted may therefore be understood to signify nothing more, than that his intercession will last till its designs are accomplished. He ever lives to make intercession, and does not die like the sacrificing and interceding priests of the law ; as he reigns for ever, or from age to age, and does not, like earthly princes, descend from the throne and lie down in the grave.

“ When this work is finished,” says Dr Owen, “ then shall all the mediatory actings of Christ cease for evermore ; for God will then have completely finished the whole design of his wisdom and grace in the constitution of his person and offices.” He adds, “ I would extend this no farther than as to what concerneth the exercise of Christ’s mediatory office with respect to the church below, and the enemies of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity.” ‡ I subjoin the words of Dr Smith : “ When all the designs (of the kingdom of

* Rev. vii. 17.
chap. xix, xx.

† Heb. vii. 25.

‡ Owen on the Person of Christ,

Christ) are accomplished, the mediatorial system as to all these (its present) modes of exercise shall cease; Christ will no longer have to act as a Redeemer and Saviour, the number of his elect will have been accomplished, and his church presented perfect and complete to himself, and to his Divine Father; as a faithful ambassador whose commission is finished, he will honourably give it back to Him who appointed him, and will return to his own personal station, as the Divine and Eternal Son; and then will a new order of the moral universe commence, and the unspeakably vast assemblage of holy creatures, delivered and for ever secured from sin and misery, shall possess the IMMEDIATE fruition of the Father. In his sovereign love the scheme of mediatorial redemption originated, and its blessed completion shall be, in the most sublime and eternally admirable manner, "unto the praise of his glory." God will be all things in all to those happy beings.*

* Smith's Scripture Testimony, Book iv. chap. 4.

LECTURE LXV.

ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION: ITS NECESSITY, AND WHAT IT IMPLIES.
—EXTERNAL MEANS OF IT: THE WORD AND ORDINANCES.—DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL CALL OF THE GOSPEL.—THE
LATTER THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.—PROOF THAT CONVERSION
IS THE EFFECT OF DIVINE GRACE.

THE purchase of salvation was made by Jesus Christ in the character of High Priest, when he paid the price of his precious blood. But although it was the consequence of this transaction, that the salvation of his people was certain, yet something farther was necessary to make them actual partakers of it. Notwithstanding the propitiatory sacrifice of the cross, they come into the world in a state of guilt and depravity, and often remain in that state for a considerable time. It might seem to us consonant to justice, that, the atonement having been made, the benefit of it should be enjoyed by every individual for whom it was offered, as soon as he is in a capable state; or that, in the first moment of his existence, he should be set free from the curse of the law, and regenerated by the Spirit even in the womb of his mother. We find however that such is not the case; and in order to account for it, we should reflect, that God is not bound by our notions of fitness and propriety, which are often founded on narrow views; that reasons are manifest to his understanding, which give rise to a procedure different from what we should have expected; that he had an undoubted right, when he purposed the redemption

of mankind, to settle according to his own will the season and order of its application ; and that the demands of justice will be fully satisfied, if all the elect are delivered from condemnation and misery, whether the event take place at an earlier or a later period. It is enough, that the terms of the covenant which was made with Christ are ultimately fulfilled. The grand stipulation was, that if “ he would make his soul an offering for sin,” he should “ see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied ;” * and all the circumstances relative to the communication of its benefits, were the subject of subordinate arrangements. The sovereignty of God in the dispensation of grace is displayed, not only in the selection of the persons, to whom it is exercised without any reason on their part, and often with a disregard of the grounds of human preference ; but also in calling some of them at the first hour, and others not till the last. With respect to the time, nothing that we know of is necessary, but that they should be called during the course of their life, beyond which the season of mercy does not extend.

The purchase of redemption by Christ in the character of our Priest, secures the salvation of his people. But, as they are by nature children of wrath even as others, they must undergo a change both relative and real ; relative in respect of the law, by being acquitted from its charges, and real in respect of their views and dispositions. In the language of Scripture, “ their blind eyes must be opened, and they must be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith which is in Christ.” † Accordingly the divine procedure towards them is represented in the following order : “ Whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ;” and these are preliminary steps to their final salvation, for “ whom he justified, them he also glorified.” ‡

The external means which God employs in the application of redemption, are his ordinances, and particularly his Word, read and heard. “ It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.” § Some indeed have supposed, that

* Is. liii. 10, 11. † Acts xxvi. 18. ‡ Rom. viii. 29, 30. || Ib. i. 16.

there is a revelation of grace, (which however they acknowledge to be obscure) in the dispensations of providence. They can only mean, that there are such appearances in the course of the moral government of God, as may lead to the conclusion that he is placable, and will pardon sinners who repent. It is enough to say that, with respect to this revelation, the Scriptures are silent, or rather they virtually deny it, while they declare that it is from themselves alone that we derive authentic information of his gracious designs. We see his goodness and patience in providence ; but, although thoughtless men may infer, that he is an easy indulgent Being, and such a one as themselves, the indications of nature will not relieve from its fears, a mind conscious of guilt and deeply sensible of demerit. By a person under a conviction of sin, the anxious question will be asked, “ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High God ?” * and ignorant of the effectual means of appeasing his wrath, he will be ready to offer his flocks and herds as an atonement, and even his first-born son, as men have sometimes done in the madness of despair. If there is a revelation of grace in the dispensations of providence, the abettors of this opinion may be called upon to produce instances in which it has been effectual to turn sinners to God. Nothing is more vain than speculations concerning what may be ; let it be shown that the thing has actually happened. Where shall we find those converts of natural light ? Is it among the ancient philosophers who talked of virtue, but did not practise it ? is it among modern heathens, who, amidst the dreadful penances to which some of them submit for the expiation of their sins, discover gross ignorance of the character of God, and of the genuine nature and spirit of religion ?

This opinion has been adopted by a late writer in his *New Literal Translation of the Epistles*, with this difference, that he traces the notions entertained by heathens of the placability of the divine nature, to the source of revelation. “ The heathens in general,” says Dr Macknight, “ believed their deities placable, and in that persuasion, offered to them propitiatory sacrifices, and expected to be pardoned and blessed by them even in a future state. But these hopes they did

* Mic. vi. 6.

not derive from the law or light of nature, but from the promise which God made to the first parents of mankind. For that promise being handed down by tradition to Noah and his sons, they communicated the knowledge thereof, together with the use of sacrifices, to all their descendants. So that the hope of pardon and immortality, which the pious heathen entertained, was the very hope which the gospel hath now clearly brought to light, and was derived from the same source, namely, from divine revelation." * It seems from this statement, that the heathens have the means of salvation without the written Word. It may be objected that Paul expressly affirms, that men are justified by faith, which implies a revelation of the Saviour, and seems to exclude those who have not been favoured with it; for he tells us that it comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. But, fatal as this objection may be deemed to his hypothesis, this writer removes it with great ease by a definition of faith contrived for the purpose. "Faith does not consist in the belief of particular doctrines, far less in the belief of doctrines which men never had an opportunity of knowing, but in such an earnest desire to know and to do the will of God, as leads them conscientiously to use such means as they have for gaining the knowledge of his will, and for doing it when found. And inasmuch as the influences of the Spirit of God are not confined to them who enjoy revelation, but are promised in the gracious covenant made with mankind at the fall to all who are sincere, a heathen by these influences may attain the faith just now described, and thereby may please God. For faith is more a work of the heart than of the understanding. So that, although the persons to whom revelation is denied, may not have the same objects of belief with those who enjoy revelation, they may have the same spirit of faith." † Nothing is wanting to this scheme but evidence of its truth, proof that the influences of the Spirit are communicated to heathens, and that faith consists in a sincere desire to know, and a disposition to do, the will of God. Such proof this celebrated theologian has neglected to give. He asserts these things, and then reasons from them, as if they were self-evident, or had been established by a

* Com. on Romans, chap. i. View.

† Ib. chap. ii. View.

prior demonstration. It is curious to observe, how, having laid down his arbitrary definition of faith, he proceeds with as much confidence as if it were an axiom, to explain by it the Epistle to the Romans, and other passages in the writings of Paul. If you peruse his works with attention, you will find many instances of gratuitous assumption; and indeed there is hardly any author who more freely deals out his *ipse dixit* as argument both in doctrine and in criticism, or who is more remarkable for wresting and misinterpreting the Scriptures. The present hypothesis is a baseless fabric; it is false in all its parts, and is such a barefaced contradiction of the doctrine of the Apostle, as is not surpassed by the most perverse commentary upon his writings.

While I deny, that there is any revelation of grace but in the Scriptures, and any external means of salvation but the Word and the ordinances of the Christian religion, I admit, that the dispensations of providence are subservient to God's merciful designs. They can be considered, however, only as subordinate means, operating in concurrence with the Word, and having no efficacy without it. By calamities, and dangers, and the prospect of death, men may be awakened to a concern for their souls; but they will not return to God, and obtain the well-grounded hope of future happiness, till their minds are directed to the Scriptures, in which pardon is promised to believers. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* "The grace of faith," says our Confession, "whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word; by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened."†

The Word of God consists of two principal parts, the Law and the Gospel, which are both employed in the conversion of sinners. "By the law is the knowledge of sin."‡ When it is applied to the conscience, it shews the sinner his depravity and guilt, makes him sensible of his danger while he is under its curse, and convinces him of his utter inability to relieve himself, because he is incapable of obeying its precepts, and of satisfying for his manifold violations of them. These

* Rom. x. 17.

† Conf. xiv. 1.

‡ Rom. iii. 20.

discoveries create an earnest desire for deliverance from the wretchedness of his natural state, and prepare him to accept it when offered to him ; but they are calculated in themselves to drive him to despair, and would have this effect if they were alone. But the Gospel comes with its proclamation of mercy, exhibits the Saviour in his fulness of merit and grace, makes a free offer of his salvation to sinners, and calls upon every man to accept the gift of God with gratitude, and in the exercise of faith. It is evident, that it is the Gospel which is properly the instrument of conversion, and that the law is only subsidiary, by producing that state of mind in which salvation becomes desirable, and without which it will be regarded with indifference, and the preference given to the transitory interests of the present life. It is by the Gospel that true penitence is awakened, which implies not only the fear of wrath, but the hatred of sin arising from the love of God. The mind is enlightened, the heart is changed, and all those exercises which are called the graces of the Spirit, as faith, and love, and hope, and submission, and a desire for perfection, are excited by its doctrines and promises.

God externally calls men by his Word, which is addressed to persons of every nation, of every condition, and of every character. “Unto you, O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men.” “Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”* It has been affirmed, indeed, that all men are not the objects of this call, but that it is confined to sensible sinners ; by whom are meant persons who have been awakened, and are serious in their desire for salvation. So far, indeed, has this idea been carried, that some have denied that the Gospel should be preached to sinners, as such, in the common acceptation of the word. They will preach it before them, but not to them ; that is, they will not offer salvation to them, and invite them to believe. The plainest points of Theology have been made the subjects of controversy and misrepresentation. This is one of the refinements of orthodoxy, and has been deduced from high notions respecting the decrees ; but it happens to be in direct opposition to many passages of Scripture, and particularly to the commission of Christ to the Apostles which was quoted above.

* Prov. viii. 4. Mark xvi. 15.

I do not approve of the method of some Divines, who have endeavoured to explain away those passages of Scripture in which sensible sinners are supposed to be addressed, and to shew that the characters by which they are described are applicable to sinners in general. It is the way of disputants, who are more zealous than wise, to make every thing bend to their favourite opinion. Surely we may grant, that awakened sinners are sometimes the objects of the invitations of Scripture, as it would be surprising indeed if no particular notice were taken of them; and, at the same time, we may believe that the offer of salvation is universal. It was a mixed congregation, or rather a congregation composed entirely of unbelievers, (for they were all Jews and proselytes, who then for the first time heard the Gospel,) whom Paul addressed in the following words:—"Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins."* After the cure of the lame man in the temple, Peter did not inquire whether those who crowded around him were the elect, or sensible sinners, but said, without hesitation, to the whole multitude, "Repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."† To preach the Gospel, is to proclaim pardon through Jesus Christ, to every man who shall believe; and as this is the sense in which it is commonly understood among us, so it will appear, I am persuaded, to every unprejudiced person, to be the Scriptural meaning of it. "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."‡

God calls men externally by his Word. But as the Word is preached to all men without distinction, it follows, that he calls many to whom he has purposed not to give salvation. A question, therefore, naturally arises, What is the reason of this procedure, and how can it be reconciled with his sincerity? The difficulty is substantially the same in the system of those who admit that God had a certain knowledge of future events, whether they are followers of Calvin or Arminius. For how shall we account for his conduct, in not only offering salvation to men who he knows will not accept it, but in using the

* Acts xiii. 38.

† Ib. iii. 19.

‡ Rev. xxii. 17.

most earnest entreaties, and cogent arguments, to persuade them? I acknowledge that the difficulty, although it presses upon both systems, is greater in that of those who hold the doctrine of absolute and unconditional decrees; because it follows from this doctrine, that God does not intend to bestow salvation on the reprobate; while the others are at liberty to ascribe to him the intention, if they can only reconcile it with the foresight of the event, and explain how, in innumerable cases, it should fail of the effect. Several distinctions have been proposed, in order to throw some light on this dark subject. The external call, it has been said, is extended to the elect and the reprobate in a different manner. It is addressed to the elect primarily and directly, the ministry of the Gospel having been instituted for their sake, to gather them into the church, insomuch that, if none of them remained to be saved, it would cease. It respects the reprobate secondarily and indirectly, because they are mixed with the elect, who are known to God alone, and consequently it could not be addressed to them, without the reprobate being included. This dispensation has been illustrated by rain, which, descending upon the earth according to a general law, the final cause of which is the fructification of the soil, falls upon places where it is of no use, as rocks and sandy deserts. Again, it has been said, that the end of the external call may be viewed in a twofold light, as it respects God, and as it respects the call; and these may be distinguished as the end of the worker, and the end of the work. The end of the work, or of the external call, is the salvation of men, because it is the natural tendency of the preaching of the Gospel to lead them to faith and repentance. But this is not the end of the Worker, or God, who does not intend to save all who are called, but those alone to whom he has decreed to give effectual grace. I shall not be surprised to find that these distinctions have not lessened the difficulty in your apprehension. While they promise to give a solution of it, they are neither more nor less than a repetition of it in different words. I shall subjoin only another observation, which has been frequently made, that, although God does not intend to save the reprobate, he is serious in calling them by the Gospel; for he declares to them what would be agreeable to him,

namely, that they should repent and believe, and he promises, most sincerely, eternal life to all who shall comply. The call of the Gospel does not shew what he has purposed to do, but what he wills men to do. From his promises, his threatenings, and his invitations, it only appears that it would be agreeable to him that men should do their duty, because he necessarily approves of the obedience of his creatures, and that it is his design to save some of them ; but the event demonstrates that he had no intention to save them all ; and this should not seem strange, as he was under no obligation to do so.

Mr Burke, in his treatise concerning the Sublime and Beautiful, has observed, when speaking of the attempt of Sir Isaac Newton to account for gravitation, by the supposition of a subtle elastic ether, that “ when we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth. All we do after, is but a faint struggle, that shews we are in an element which does not belong to us.” We may pronounce, I think, these attempts to reconcile the universal call of the Gospel with the sincerity of God, to be a faint struggle to extricate ourselves from the profundities of Theology. They are far indeed from removing the difficulty. We believe, on the authority of Scripture, that God has decreed to give salvation to some, and to withhold it from others. We know, at the same time, that he offers salvation to all in the Gospel ; and to suppose that he is not sincere, would be to deny him to be God. It may be right to endeavour to reconcile these things, because knowledge is always desirable, and it is our duty to seek it as far as it can be attained. But if we find that beyond a certain limit we cannot go, let us be content to remain in ignorance. Let us reflect, however, that we are ignorant in the present case only of the connexion between two truths, and not of the truths themselves, for these are clearly stated in the Scriptures. We ought therefore to believe both, although we cannot reconcile them. Perhaps the subject is too high for the human intellect in its present state. It may be, that however correct our notions of the Divine purposes seem, there is some misapprehension which gives rise to the difficulty. In the study of Theology, we are admonished at every step to be

humble, and feel the necessity of faith, or an implicit dependence upon the testimony of Him who alone perfectly knows himself, and will not deceive us.

When we say that the Word of God is the external instrument of conversion, we must be understood to speak of persons who are capable of knowing and believing it. As infants are not fit subjects of instruction, their regeneration must be effected without means, by the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit on their souls. There are adult persons, too, to whom the use of reason has been denied. It would be harsh and unwarrantable to suppose that they are, on this account, excluded from salvation; and to such of them as God has chosen, it may be applied in the same manner as to infants. This is the doctrine of our Church: "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." *

The Word of God, which reveals truths so great and interesting, is calculated to illuminate the minds of men, to impress their consciences, and to excite their affections. But often it either entirely fails to produce these effects, or produces them only in such a degree, that no radical and permanent change ensues. We affirm that the Word is the ordinary instrument, but we deny that it is the efficient cause of conversion. We are borne out in this assertion by the express and repeated declarations of Scripture, from which we learn that Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God gives the increase. † Hence we distinguish between the external and the internal call, of which the former extends to all to whom the Gospel is preached, while the latter takes place only in the case of the elect. The cause of the difference which we observe in the hearers of the Gospel, of whom some believe, and others reject it, is not free-will, but Divine grace, which works effectually in the former, to will and to do.

This is the doctrine of our church, and, as we shall endeavour to shew, is also the doctrine of Scripture. But, as it directly tends to humble the pride of man, to annihilate his pretensions to merit, and to appropriate to God the whole

* Conf. chap. x. §. 3.

† 1 Cor. iii. 6.

glory of his salvation, it is not palatable to his vitiated taste, and hence it has met with much opposition in ancient and modern times.

Pelagius and his followers maintained that our nature was not corrupted by the fall; that we come into the world in the same state of innocence in which Adam was created; that we have free-will, and are able to do good if we please. According to this system, such a change as we mean by regeneration or conversion is unnecessary. They did, indeed, talk of grace, and Divine assistance in the performance of good works; but these words were used solely in compliment to the phraseology of Scripture, and to impose upon those who might be so simple as to be satisfied with sounds, without inquiring into the sense. When they explained their own meaning, the illusion vanished. "The grace of God, and the assistance which he affords us to preserve us from sinning," says Augustine, "they place either in nature and free-will, or in the law and doctrine; so that when God is said to assist men to shun evil, and to do good, nothing more is meant than that he shows them by revelation what they should do." Thus they admitted only the external call. Men were indebted to God solely for the knowledge communicated by his Word, and the exhortations addressed to them in it; the use which was made of these depended entirely on themselves.

In modern times, the doctrine of Pelagius has been adopted by Socinians, and some of the followers of Arminius, who have carried the principles of the sect to the utmost length. With respect to the necessity of Divine grace, and the degree in which it is necessary, there has been a variety of opinions, distinguished by slight shades of difference, which it would be tedious and useless to enumerate. An opinion which has been maintained by many, both Papists and Protestants, is that of sufficient grace, which has been defined to be "grace by which God so calls, excites, and is ready to assist men, in directing, protecting, and co-operating with them, that they are, indeed, able to will, to believe, and be converted, and do good works, although they do not actually will it." It is the same with universal grace, which is so called because it is given to all men. God, who is willing to save all men, has given them sufficient means of faith and repentance; but these means are

subject to free-will, which has the power to use this grace or not, to believe or not to believe. Some have gone so far as to maintain, that God was bound by the new covenant to furnish every man with this grace, because otherwise he would have been chargeable with demanding from us what we had not strength to perform.

Similar sentiments are general, and are entertained by many who have not studied the systems in which they are defended, and do not arrange themselves under the standard of Pelagius, or Arminius, or any other heresiarch. They are agreeable to human nature; they seem to arise spontaneously in the mind. It is supposed that we have a power to convert ourselves, not so strong perhaps as it originally was, but still sufficient, especially if we are favoured with proper means and opportunities; that God is ready to assist our sincere endeavours; that, although we must be indebted, in some degree, to his grace, our conversion depends chiefly upon ourselves; and that, if we will only reflect seriously on the subject of religion, and resolve in earnest to forsake our sins, the purposed change will be effected. This doctrine is taught from the press and the pulpit; is received in its most unqualified form, without any doubt of its truth, by the grossly ignorant, who, almost in every place, constitute the majority; and, by some who affect to be more wise, is regarded, when set out in proper phrases, as the pure Gospel of Christ.

In opposition to all the modifications of error upon this subject, we affirm, that conversion is effected by the almighty grace of God; that, although man does not concur in it, he is in the first instance passive, and his concurrence is the consequence of supernatural power communicated to him; and that he does not come to God till he is effectually called by the operations of the Holy Spirit in his soul.

The truth of this doctrine appears from the accounts given in Scripture, of the corrupt state of mankind by nature. They are said to be not only diseased and weak, but “to be dead in trespasses and sins;” * to be not only blind, but “darkness” itself; † to be “natural” or animal men, who “do not receive, and cannot know, the things of the Spirit;” ‡ to be “the servants of sin;” § to be “the enemies of God,” § who are not,

* Eph. ii. 1. † Ib. v. 8, &c. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14. § Rom. vi. 17. § Col. i. 21.

and cannot be subject to his law.* Now, if these things are true, how is it possible that men have free-will to good as well as to evil; that they possess a degree of moral power, which, by culture, may increase in strength, so as to change the current of their affections and actions; that with some assistance they can work out their salvation? It is not sufficient to open the eye-lids of a blind person, to pour the full blaze of light upon his face; you must remove the impediment of vision, or form the organ anew. It is not sufficient to go to the grave of a dead man, and with a loud voice call upon him to arise; you must bring back his spirit from the invisible regions, and unite it again to his body. It is not sufficient to tell the slave, that his condition is wretched and degraded, and to awaken his natural desire for liberty; you must break his fetters, and rescue him from the power of his oppressor. The situation of the sinner is more hopeless than that of this man; for he is a willing slave, he hugs his chains, he thinks himself already free, and despises the liberty which the Gospel offers, as the most grievous bondage. There is, indeed, a difference between a person physically, and one morally dead. The body in the grave is destitute of all life, and has lost all its energies; while the sinner is still a rational being, and is capable of acts of understanding and will. But he is divested of every moral habit; he cannot discern spiritual things in a spiritual manner, nor choose what is spiritually good, till his natural powers be renovated and invigorated. Hence, "the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not."† Hence, although commanded, and exhorted, and addressed by every argument, to return to the service of God, he refuses, till he be roused and persuaded by something of greater efficacy than the clearest demonstration, and the most impressive oratory which men can employ.

The necessity of almighty grace to the conversion of the soul, is farther evident from the terms which are used to describe its operations, as a creation, a resurrection, a new birth, the taking away of the heart of stone, and the giving of a heart of flesh. Surely something more is implied in such terms, than an external proposal of the truth, or such faint assistance, that it remains in our power to accept or reject it

* Rom. viii. 7.

† John i. 5.

at our pleasure. If the words and phrases employed by the Holy Ghost have any meaning, they import such an exertion of Divine power as was made in bringing all things at first out of nothing, and in raising Lazarus or Christ from the grave; or is still made in the production of organized bodies out of pre-existent materials, and infusing into them a principle of life. How do such expressions agree with the notion, that God merely persuades us, as one man persuades another, by rational arguments; or, that he merely affords us a little help, as we give our arm to a person who is able to walk, but, labouring under a certain degree of weakness, might stagger and fall if he were left alone? How could he be said, upon this supposition, to create us, to raise us from a state of death, to give us a heart entirely new? It would not comport with the wisdom of God, whose design in the Scriptures is to give us just and accurate notions of his dispensations, to use expressions which obviously signify, that the work of converting sinners is wholly his own, while something very different is intended, and the truth is, that they convert themselves. If we would not cast a reflection upon him, as having spoken loosely, and in such a manner as to mislead us, we must conclude that a mighty and uncontrollable power is displayed in the regeneration of the soul. It is no objection, that sinners are commanded to “make” to themselves “a new heart, and a new spirit,” to “repent and turn” to the Lord.* One passage of Scripture should be compared and explained in consistency with another; and we must therefore infer, that such commands do not suppose any power in man to obey them, but are intended to point out his duty, to declare, not what he can do, but what he ought to do, and what he will do when God enables him by his grace. Upon this view of such commands, is founded the celebrated saying of Augustine, in his Confessions: *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis*, “Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt.”

I may mention, as another proof, all those passages of Scripture which represent Divine grace as necessary to the reception of the Word; and consequently, the external call as insufficient to accomplish the end. The Psalmist prays, that

* Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.

God would open his eyes, to see wondrous things out of his law;* and Paul, that God would give to the Ephesians the Spirit of "wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ."† These prayers suppose something more than an external proposal of the truth, which David and the Ephesians already enjoyed, and would have been superfluous, if they had possessed, in their own minds, the power of spiritual discernment. Our Saviour is said to have opened "the understandings" of the disciples "to understand the Scriptures;"‡ not only to have explained the Scriptures to them, but to have enabled them to apprehend their meaning, by an internal operation on their minds. Lest, however, this passage should be supposed to refer to a miraculous illumination, intended to qualify them for the apostolical office, let me remind you of what is said of Lydia, that the "Lord opened her heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul."§ There was nothing in her case, which required a peculiar interposition, and we must therefore consider what was done to her, as done to all who are converted. The opening of the heart, or an exertion of Divine power upon the understanding and the will, is necessary to dispose men to attend to the Gospel, and to receive it with faith. It is not the Word itself which opens the heart, as if nothing more were necessary to conversion than the use of external means; but this is a work of God, distinct from the exhibition of the truth. The opening of the heart signifies the removal of the obstructions, whether arising from prejudices or the influence of corrupt inclinations, and can be effected only by him, who "makes old things pass away, and all things become new." The distinction between the preaching of the word, and the application of it by Divine power, is stated in other passages. "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost."§ "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."¶ If ministers are said to be workers together with God, it is only because they perform the external and subordinate office of preaching the Word, and ad-

* Ps. cxix. 18.

† Eph. i. 17.

‡ Luke xxiv. 45.

§ Acts xvi. 14.

§ 1 Thess. i. 5.

¶ 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

ministering the other ordinances of religion. It is the Spirit of God who has access to the soul, and “turns it as the rivers of water.”

In the last place, I may refer you to those passages of Scripture, which attribute to God an internal and immediate agency upon the soul in conversion, as when he is said to work in us “both to will and to do;”* “to fulfil in us the work of faith with power;”† to work in us “that which is well pleasing in his sight;”‡ to put his laws within us, and write them in our hearts;|| to give us a new heart, and to put a right spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments.§ These expressions cannot be softened down, to mean only that he presents sufficient motives to incline our hearts to obey; or that he affords us such a degree of assistance, as may prove altogether ineffectual. There is an implied contrast between the mode in which men operate upon one another, and the action of God. They propose objects, and endeavour to fix the attention upon them, and to awaken activity by arguments and persuasives; but he moves and changes the heart.

We conclude, from these arguments, that as the external call is by the Word, the internal call is by the Spirit. The persons of the Godhead have each a peculiar province in the work of redemption. As it originated with the Father, on whose love the eternal purpose of saving sinners was founded, and was obtained by the obedience and death of the Son, so it is applied by the Holy Ghost, the author of spiritual wisdom, and faith, and holiness, and consolation. Hence, this office is expressly ascribed to him. He is called “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.”¶ God promises, as we have already heard, to “put his Spirit within us, that we may walk in his statutes, and keep his judgments, and do them.”** In a word, we are said to be born of the Spirit. “Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”††

When our Lord taught this doctrine to Nicodemus, he did not understand it, and seems to have totally misapprehended the subject, so great was his ignorance of one of the first

* Phil. ii. 13.

† 2 Thess. i. 11.

‡ Heb. xiii. 21.

|| Ib. viii. 10.

§ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

¶ Eph. i. 17.

** Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

†† John iii. 5.

principles of religion, although he was a teacher among the Jews, or, the Teacher, by way of eminence, as the original imports, in which he is called ὁ διδασκαλος. “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”* There is not the same gross misconception among Christians; but many of them wonder as much, when the necessity of regeneration is asserted, and may be addressed in the words of our Saviour,—“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.”† No man will wonder at the doctrine, who believes upon the authority of Scripture, and is convinced by experience, that human nature is wholly depraved. Admitting this principle, he will perceive that men must undergo a radical change, to qualify them for entering into the kingdom of heaven, and that it can be effected only by the almighty power of God. The doctrine gives rise to no dispute among those who are awakened to a just sense of their moral condition by nature. As they rejoice that God has promised to renew us after his image, and has for this purpose sent the Spirit of grace, so it is their earnest prayer, that they may be the subjects of his operations, and thus be enabled to love and serve their Creator and Redeemer. The doctrine is opposed by cold-hearted speculatists, by men full of prejudice and lofty notions of the dignity of human nature, who will not stoop to be absolute debtors to Divine grace. Hence, they make every effort, by wresting the Scriptures, and by an apparatus of sophistical arguments, to reserve to themselves, wholly or in part, the glory of conversion, if they admit that there is such a thing. But all things are of God in redemption, as well as in creation. Every good thought, every devout emotion, every holy action, is the effect of his grace; for “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”‡

Nothing is a clearer proof of the alienation of man from God, than his reluctance to receive this doctrine, and others of a similar nature. The idea which we should naturally form of a holy and devout creature is, that he would feel his obligations to his Maker as benefits; that, with ineffable pleasure, he would render the due return of gratitude and praise

* John iii. 4.

† Ib. 7.

‡ Eph. ii. 10.

for favours already conferred ; and that, if I may speak so, he would open his soul to receive new communications of his goodness. But man, blinded by prejudices, elated with pride, admiring himself, and seeking his own glory, would break all the ties of dependence, and be the artificer of his own fortune in this world, and in the next. We cannot conceive an angel in heaven to be actuated by such sentiments and feelings ; to balance accounts with his Creator, and to settle how much he owes to himself, and how much to the Author of his being. This strange procedure is reserved for our world, where the most helpless of all creatures, through a singular infatuation, boast of their powers ; and, when the arm of Omnipotence is stretched out to assist them, deem their honour engaged scornfully to reject its aid. Such is the conduct of those who cavil at the doctrine of regenerating grace, and labour to prove, by an array of what they deem rational arguments, that man can attain, by his own efforts, the moral excellence which the Scripture pronounces to be the gift of Heaven.

LECTURE LXVI.

ON THE APPLICATION OF REDEMPTION.

FARTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE SPIRIT'S AGENCY IN CONVERSION.—DIVINE GRACE, ITS MODE OF OPERATION AND ITS INVINCIBILITY.—ITS EFFECT, REGENERATION.—THE CHANGE IMPLIED IN REGENERATION, ILLUMINATION OF THE MIND AND RENOVATION OF THE WILL.—CONSEQUENCES.

THE application of redemption commences with the call of God, by which sinners are brought from a state of nature into a state of grace. This call is external by the Gospel, in which salvation is offered to them, and they are invited and commanded to receive it; and internal by the Spirit, who persuades and enables them to comply. The former is ineffectual without the latter, as we shewed from the corruption of human nature, which has sunk into a state of complete spiritual disability, and from the express and varied language of Scripture, which ascribes our conversion to the power of God, and represents its influence upon our minds and hearts as indispensably necessary to our cordial reception of the truth.

The many passages to which we referred obviously teach, that the true cause of the efficacy of the external means is, the invisible power of God silently influencing the soul. Unless the Scriptures were intended to mislead us by the use of figurative and hyperbolical language, which means much less than meets the ear, or means something very different from what the terms naturally suggest, there can be no doubt that our doctrine is legitimately deduced from them. It may

be asked in what other manner the inspired writers would have expressed themselves, if it had been their acknowledged intention to teach that, besides the external call of the Word, there is necessary the internal call of the Spirit, and that this consists in an exertion of power, the object of which is not merely to assist us, as if we possessed a certain degree of strength, but to perform the whole work, and to leave to us only the office of concurring in its progress? Would they have made use of any other terms, or, in the whole compass of their vocabulary, could they have found terms more appropriate to their design, or which would have more definitely pointed out the exclusive operation of Omnipotence? What more could any person have said, who intended to signify that the spiritual change of the soul is the work, not of man himself, but of God, than to call this change a creation out of nothing, and a resurrection from the dead?

We have seen that, notwithstanding the explicit testimony of Scripture, many attempts have been made to assign to men an important agency in the application of redemption. Pelagius, who denied original sin, attributed it wholly to ourselves, and spoke of Divine grace only in deference to the phraseology of Scripture, and in compliance with the common language of Christians. When he said that God enlightens us by his heavenly grace, he meant nothing more than that he has given an external revelation. All are followers of Pelagius, who maintain that man is by nature possessed of a power to comply with the call of the Gospel. Some talk of sufficient grace, and others of concursive grace, understanding in fact the same thing, namely, an ability given to all men to believe, so that those who do actually believe are not more indebted to God than unbelievers, but may take praise to themselves for having made a better use of their power; in direct opposition to Scripture, which declares that it is not of him that willeth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

We shall not be surprised at the attempts which have been made to bring forward man, as in whole or in part the author of his salvation, if we reflect upon the pride of his heart, which prompts him, like our first parents, to aspire to be a God, possessing not only the knowledge of good and evil, but also the power to do the one as well as the other. To gratify this

principle, Scripture is tortured and perverted, and is made to speak a language most foreign to its obvious design, and to the unquestionable sentiments of the writers. We may remark also in this, as in other cases, the unhappy influence of philosophy falsely so called, upon the doctrines of revelation. The sentiments of the ancient sects of philosophers have been introduced into Christianity, and have produced the unhallowed compound of what is called Rational Theology. The power of man to make himself virtuous was held by them all : many professed disciples of Christ have chosen rather to adopt their proud and presumptuous conclusions, than to acquiesce in his humiliating lessons. When some Divines talk of the human heart as the true source of virtue, and of the necessity of its originating in our independent choice, that it may possess the nature of virtue, we seem to be listening to a philosopher of the Porch, who described his good man as superior to the gods, because the latter were virtuous by nature, while the virtue of the former was derived from himself.

When we ascribe conversion to the grace of God, it is necessary to ascertain the meaning of the term, grace, which in Scripture bears a variety of senses. It sometimes signifies the free favour of God, or his unmerited love, considered as the source of our salvation, and of all our blessings and privileges : “ Who hath saved us, and called us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” * It signifies again the Gospel, in which the love of God is revealed, and by which the blessings flowing from it are communicated. This is the saving grace of God, which “ hath appeared to all men,” † and the grace of God, which we are exhorted “ not to receive in vain.” ‡ Lastly, the term is used to denote the operation of Divine love upon the soul, as when Paul says, “ By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.” || It is in this sense that we speak of the grace of God, when we call it the efficient cause of the conversion of sinners.

In speaking of spiritual things, we are often under the necessity of employing terms originally intended to express material objects, and we are always in danger of transferring

* 2 Tim. i. 9. † Tit. ii. 11. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 1. || 1 Cor. xv. 10.

to the former ideas borrowed from the latter. The grace of God is sometimes spoken of, and sometimes probably conceived, as if it were something substantial, something distinct from, and inherent in the soul, like a portion of matter mingled with another, by which its qualities are corrected or changed. But it is manifest, upon the slightest reflection, that such notions are improper when applied to a spiritual subject. The grace of God must be understood to signify simply his power freely exerted to produce a change in the moral state of the soul, or, by a metonymy, the change itself, the name of the cause being given to the effect.

It is not contrary to the analogy of nature, that the grace of God, as denoting the exertion of his power upon the soul, should be employed in the conversion of sinners. It is certain, from reason as well as from the express declarations of Scripture, that creatures are dependent upon their Maker for the continuance of their existence, and the exercise of their faculties. As the various parts of creation are linked together, and afford each other mutual support; as the heavens fertilize the earth, the earth supplies its inhabitants with food, its inhabitants propagate their kind, rear their offspring, and co-operate for the purposes of society; so the whole system is supported by the providence of God, as the Heathens acknowledged, when they represented it as suspended from the throne of Jupiter by a golden chain, and his energy as the primary cause of its movements. It is no objection that we cannot explain the manner in which God acts upon his creatures, if the fact is certain, that it is owing to his constant influence that we live, and think, and will, and move our limbs, and perform all our bodily and mental functions. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." There is no such difference between this case and the conversion of sinners, that we should hesitate to concede in the one what we admit in the other. If the influence of Providence in upholding, exciting, and directing us, is not destructive of our rational nature, I should wish to know upon what ground the influence of grace, in giving us new moral inclinations and habits, is supposed to be subversive of it. The operation of the power of God in regeneration, may be considered as of the same kind with its operation in providence, although it is

exerted for a different purpose. Some, indeed, may choose to say that it is of a different kind, lest we should confound nature and grace, and represent grace only as nature carried to a higher degree of perfection. But this danger is imaginary. There are not two powers in God ; but his energy is one, and is distinguished by the objects on which, and the ends for which, it is exerted. It is the same power which creates, and upholds in existence ; the same power which forms a stone and a sunbeam ; the same power which gives vegetable life to a tree, animal life to a brute, and rational life to a man. In like manner, it is the same power which assists us in the natural exercise of our faculties, and enables us to exercise them in a spiritual manner. Hence it does not appear that there is any reasonable ground on which we should reject the doctrine of regenerating grace, any more than the doctrine of providential influence.

That the grace of God, in the application of redemption, is mighty, may be inferred from the effect. It is a change of the whole man, of his views, and principles, and inclinations, and pursuits. Now, this is a change which no means merely human have ever been able to accomplish. Not to mention the total failure of philosophy to reform mankind, or even in a single instance to inspire true virtue, we may remark, that the superior instructions, and precepts, and motives of Christianity, although employed with great diligence and earnestness, prove so often ineffectual, as to convince every person of reflection, that when they do take effect, their success should be attributed to a higher cause than their intrinsic excellence, or the eloquence of the teachers. The hand of God is clearly seen in the sudden, commanding, and lasting impressions which are often made upon the mind. When the thoughtless are compelled to think, and to think with an intenseness and seriousness which they never formerly felt ; when the careless are in a moment affected with a sense of their most important interests ; when the lips which were accustomed to blasphemy, learn to pray ; when the proud assume the lowly attitude and language of the penitent ; when those who were devoted to the world, give evidence that now the object of their desires and pursuits is a heavenly inheritance ; and when this revolution, so wonderful, has been effected by

the simple Word of God, and by the Word which the subjects of this change had often heard before unmoved, we must be convinced that some mighty influence has been exerted, and that that influence is divine. Here, if any where, we perceive the finger of God. Hence his power is represented as displayed in the success of the Gospel: "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." *

The power of God, exerted in the regeneration and conversion of sinners, is invincible. I make use of this term rather than the word irresistible, because, when the latter is taken in its natural import, it does not express what is the fact. Resistance *is* made to the grace of God, not only by the finally impenitent, but also by those who ultimately yield to it. In particular, when they begin to feel convictions of sin, they often endeavour to suppress them, or resort to improper expedients for relief; "going about," for example, "to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God." † In these instances, they are chargeable with opposition to grace. Those, therefore, who speak of irresistible grace, mean that it cannot be finally resisted; that it will overcome all the efforts of corrupt nature to counteract its design; and that it will ultimately render sinners obedient to the faith. But this idea is more properly expressed by the term, invincible. Man must submit in the end to the power of God; and this will be more evident, if we consider that his power is not only sufficient to compel the most refractory to yield, although with the greatest reluctance, but that it can take away the spirit of opposition, and so influence the hearts of men, that this submission shall be voluntary.

Were we to say that the grace of God is not invincible, we should be under the necessity of adopting the opinion, which we have already proved to be unscriptural, that there is a power in man to comply or not to comply with the call of the Gospel. We should take the work of conversion out of the hand of God, and commit it to man himself. After God had done all that he could do for our salvation, it would depend

* Ps. cx. 2, 3.

† Rom. x. 3.

upon ourselves whether the intended effect should follow. Hence the result of the dispensation of the Gospel would be altogether uncertain. It would not be known before-hand whether all would believe, or all would disobey. If the grace of God was effectually resisted in one case, it might be effectually resisted in every case; and, consequently, although Christ shed his blood that he might bring sinners to God, and the whole economy of grace has been instituted with a view to carry the design of his death into effect, it might happen that not an individual of the human race would be saved. The very possibility of such an issue, by which the scheme of redemption would be frustrated, furnishes a strong presumption in favour of the doctrine, that the grace exercised in the conversion of sinners is not of such an equivocal character, that it may or may not accomplish its design, but that its operation is mighty and efficacious, bearing down all opposition, and "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

The great objection against the invincibility of Divine grace is, that it is subversive of the liberty of the will. It seems inconceivable to some, that a man should be free, and at the same time should be infallibly determined to a particular purpose. But, the objection proceeds upon a misapprehension of the mode of operation. The idea occurs of external force, by which a man is compelled to do something to which he is averse. It is not considered that the power of grace is not compulsive; that it puts no force upon our minds; that, instead of disturbing our mental constitution, it goes along with it; and that, in a manner at once natural and supernatural, it secures the concurrence of the will. True liberty consists in doing what we do, with knowledge and from choice; and such liberty is not only consistent with conversion, but essential to it; for if a man turn to God at all, he must turn with his heart. God does not lead us to salvation without consciousness, like stones transported from one place to another; nor without our consent, like slaves who are driven to their task by the terror of punishment. He conducts us in a manner suitable to our rational and moral nature. He so illuminates our minds, as we shall afterwards see, that we most cordially concur with his design. His

power, although able to subdue opposition, is of the mildest and most gentle kind. While he commands, he persuades ; while he draws, the sinner comes without reluctance ; and never in his life is there a freer act of volition than when he believes in Christ, and accepts of his salvation.

It is an important question on this subject, whether a sinner is merely passive in the first moment of his conversion, or his will co-operates with the grace of God ? It will facilitate the answer to it, if we distinguish between regeneration and conversion. Those who, with Pelagius, deny original sin, and maintain that there is no depravity in us, but what has been contracted by our own acts, make regeneration to consist in a voluntary change and reformation of life ; and therefore hold that man is a worker with God from the commencement of it. Indeed, according to this scheme, God merely commands him to reform, and he obeys by his own power. But, according to the Scriptures, regeneration is a change effected by *divine grace* in the state of the soul, the supernatural renovation of its faculties, the infusion of a principle of spiritual life. It is evident that, if this is a just definition, the sinner is passive ; for, till divine grace is exerted upon him, he is incapable of moral activity, and, in the language of inspiration, is “dead in trespasses and sins.” He is in the same situation with a man who is literally dead, and who, when lying in the grave, cannot contribute in any degree to the restoration of his life. He is like Lazarus, who had no concern in his own resurrection, knew not that our Saviour had come to his sepulchre to deliver him from death, and could not have obeyed the voice which called upon him to come forth, if the power which accompanied it had not brought back his spirit from the invisible world, and re-united it to his body. Regeneration is the effect of preventing grace, or of grace which precedes our endeavours, and operates alone. Conversion is the turning of the soul to God, and is expressed by our seeking the Lord, our coming to him, our forsaking our evil ways, and turning to him, and by other phrases which import activity, and allude to the motion of the body in changing its place. It obviously implies the exercise of repentance and faith, the love of God, and the choice of his service ; and these are positive acts of

the soul. In this view, the sinner co-operates with the grace of God. He does not aid grace or render it effectual by the exertion of his own natural power, but he yields to it, goes along with it, and works under its influence. Let it be carefully observed that, while we say that the sinner, although passive in regeneration, is active in conversion, we do not ascribe to him any independent activity, or represent any part of the work as properly his own. His province consists solely in concurrence. He acts because he has been acted upon. The motion of his soul towards God is the effect of the Spirit of life, who has entered into him, as the motion of the body is the effect of his inward thoughts and volitions. His conversion is, therefore, wholly of grace, that is, to grace are owing both the power to turn to God, and the actual exercise of that power; and his own convictions on this subject accord with the sentiments of Paul, who says, "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was in me." *

Regeneration, I have said, is a change of the moral state of the soul, a renovation of all its faculties. It constitutes the sinner a new creature, not in respect of his essence, but of his views, and habits, and inclinations. It is the introduction of a new and powerful principle into the soul, under the influence of which its natural faculties are exerted in a different manner from that in which they were formerly employed; and in this sense, "old things pass away, and all things become new." † Its thoughts are new, the objects of its choice are new, its aims and motives are new; and by this internal revolution, the external deportment is affected. The infusion of divine grace, like the ingrafting of a tree, alters, if I may speak so, the quality of the soul, so that, instead of the sour and crabbed fruits which it formerly produced, it now yields fruit of the most excellent kind, acceptable to God and to men. The instrument of the change, as we have already observed, is the Word of God; and the agent is his Spirit, who, moving as in the beginning of time upon the dark and turbulent mass, reduces it to order.

The first effect of divine power in the new, as in the old creation, is light. The regeneration of the soul commences

* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

with the illumination of the mind. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." * When our Saviour gave Paul a commission to the Gentiles, he sent him "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." † By the same means his own conversion was accomplished, for he tells us, that "when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood." ‡ This indeed must be the mode of procedure in every conversion, because God will always act upon us according to the nature which he has given us; and his purpose being to make us willing and obedient, there is no way in which it can be accomplished, but by the communication of clear and impressive views of truth to the mind. The Scriptures are a perfect revelation of the will of God, containing all the doctrines which we are required to believe, and all the precepts which we are bound to obey. But, although their instructions are full, plain with respect at least to every essential point, and admirably fitted to arrest the attention and engage the heart, yet the human mind is so blinded by prejudices, so captivated and misled by the illusions of sense, and the maxims of worldly wisdom, that it either rejects the information which they bring, or contents itself with a cold and careless assent to it. An unrenewed man may have perused the Scriptures, and may have acquired such distinct notions of the subjects of which they treat, as to be qualified to be a teacher of others, but at the same time, he does not perceive their real excellence, nor experience their spiritual efficacy. Hence it is evident, that, while he remains under this mental incapacity, the intended effect of the Word will not be produced, and that an operation is necessary, analogous to that performed upon the eyes of a blind man to admit the rays of light, or upon the eyes of a man whose vision is imperfect, to enable him to see objects distinctly.

The illumination of the mind does not consist in the discovery of unknown truths. To represent this as the design of it would be derogatory to the fulness of the Scriptures, and would furnish those who are not converted with the apology,

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

‡ Gal. i. 16.

that they do not possess adequate means, if there were some truths necessary to be known, which are not contained in written revelation. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul;"* that is, it is sufficient for conversion as an external mean, and there is no defect which needs to be supplied. Enthusiasts may talk of dreams, and visions, and revelations, but every sober-minded Christian can trace all his spiritual perceptions, and holy tempers, and devout feelings, to the records of the Apostles and Prophets; and if he was first awakened, or has been since impressed by the words of men, the sentiments which they conveyed were agreeable to the Scriptures, and were derived from them.

The illumination, therefore, of which we speak, consists in enabling those who are the subjects of it, to apprehend, in their true sense and importance, truths which they find in their Bibles, and which they may have often read before, without being affected by them, because there was "a veil upon their hearts." It is impossible to explain how this change of views is effected, because we know not the way of the Spirit, and impossible to make it intelligible to any man who has not experienced it. No person ever succeeded in an attempt to give a blind man an idea of colours. The regenerated themselves cannot tell how they were illuminated, or make others understand the specific difference between their present and their former conceptions. They may assure them that their views of truth were once obscure and uninteresting, and now are clear and enlivening; but such information is general and indefinite. One thing, however, they know, that whereas they were blind, now they see.

The sinner is enlightened in the knowledge of his own character and state, that, sensible of his guilt, and wretchedness, and danger, he may be prepared to accept the offers of mercy; in the knowledge of the love, and grace, and compassion of God, that he may be disposed to return to him, instead of hating, and dreading, and avoiding his presence; in the knowledge of Christ, of his substitution, and righteousness, and fulness, that he may trust in him for the supply of his wants, and, believing in him, may be restored to the favour of God. His views, indeed, upon all subjects are changed. He now is con-

* Ps. xix. 7.

vinced of the evil of sin ; he now feels the vanity of the world ; he now appreciates the value of time ; he now perceives the excellence of holiness ; he now forms a just estimate of the realities of the invisible state. Divine illumination leads him to view things as they are, whereas he formerly contemplated them through the false medium of prejudice and misconception. He awakes as from a dream, and finds himself surrounded with the solemn and interesting objects of religion. All Christians are “renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created them.” “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.”*

Having seen the effect of divine grace upon the intellectual part of our nature, let us proceed to consider the change on our moral and active principles. In giving an account of regeneration, it is usually observed, that the illumination of the understanding is followed by the renovation of the will. To renew the will is to incline it to good, to render it conformable to the will of God. This change is necessary, because the will is naturally rebellious, and its practical language is, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him ?” It is therefore said that “thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power ;”† and how this is done we learn from an Apostle : “It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”‡

The renovation of the will may be considered as the natural consequence of the illumination of the understanding. While we speak of different faculties of the soul, we should reflect that, strictly, these are only different modes in which the soul exerts itself. The understanding is the soul apprehending and contemplating ; the will is the soul choosing or refusing : good is the object of its choice ; and in order to secure a right determination, nothing more seems to be necessary than that the object should be presented in such a light, as to obtain the deliberate and final decision of the understanding in its favour. Yet we remember the words of the poet, and their truth is too often confirmed by our personal experience.

Video meliora proboque,

Deteriora sequor.

But although the heart may oppose, and often does oppose, slight and transient convictions of truth and duty, it does not

* Col. iii. 10. Eph. v. 8. † Ps. cx. 3. ‡ Phil. ii. 13.

follow that it will act the same part, when the evidence is full and irresistible, or when the word comes “ in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.” As the understanding was intended to be the leading faculty of the soul, it may be conceived, when illuminated by divine grace, actually to lead it in that train and order which is pleasing to God. However, since we do not know how he acts upon the soul, nor to what extent his influence is necessary, it is more modest to avoid determining whether his agency upon the will is mediate or immediate, and to rest in the declarations of Scripture, that “ he puts his Spirit within us, and gives us a new heart, a heart of flesh.” *

The effect of regenerating grace extends to every power of the soul, and all its movements are controlled by it. The affections have been considered by some as various modifications of the will, but whatever philosophical theory we adopt with respect to them, they are all influenced by the change. They are refined, regulated, and directed to their proper objects. New feelings and emotions, new tendencies and exercises, are the native consequences of the new views of divine things, which have been communicated to the mind. The revelation of the Saviour in his righteousness and grace, accompanied as it is with a heartfelt sense of guilt, and wretchedness, and helplessness, gives rise to faith, or that act of the soul by which it receives his offered salvation, trusts in him for acceptance with God, and finds peace, and hope, and joy, in the contemplation of his character and work. Repentance is the effect of a clear and impressive apprehension of the infinite purity of the Divine nature, to which sin stands opposed as darkness is to light; of the goodness of God whom it has offended and dishonoured; and of his mercy in Christ, the serious consideration of which is sufficient to melt the hardest, and to subdue the most stubborn heart. Godly sorrow for sin, hatred of it, prayers for deliverance from it, a purpose instantly to forsake it, and the commencement of a course of resistance and mortification, are the ingredients or the fruits of repentance. The dislike of the human heart to God flows partly from misconceptions of his character, and partly from its own corrupt inclinations. Both are removed in regeneration, when the mind is enlightened, and the will

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

is renewed. How is it possible that that man should not love God, to whom he appears the most amiable of all beings, and who is tasting that he is gracious? It would be tedious to give an enumeration of the emotions and affections which are excited in the heaven-born soul. All the fruits of the Spirit are produced, all his graces are imparted, and the heart of man, which was lately like a wilderness, overgrown with briars and thorns, is transformed into the garden of the Lord.

In treating of regeneration, it is strictly necessary to direct our attention only to the change which takes place in the state of the mind. It is here that grace operates, and here that the holy principles which it produces reside. But the seed being sown, the fruit will speedily appear. Reformation is not regeneration, but it will always be the result of it, when the conduct has been previously irregular; for "who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."* The Corinthians were adulterers, fornicators, idolators, covetous, and extortioners, before God called them by his grace; but they were "washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."† A change will even take place in the deportment of the most moral unconverted man, as soon as he is born from above. There are no gross sins, we will suppose, from which he needs to be purified; but he will become more spiritual in his conversation, more attentive to religious and relative duties, less eager in the pursuit of the world, more scrupulous in the selection of his company, more cautious in avoiding the occasions of sin and appearances of evil. The eye of an attentive and practised spectator will perceive, notwithstanding his former fair shew, that even he is become a new man. But it is in the secret recesses of his breast that he will be himself deeply conscious of the spiritual revolution. He will be sensible of a new temper of mind, or a new feeling as it may be called, in the performance of his duty; for whereas it was formerly a drudgery, it will now constitute his highest pleasure. Engaged in the service of God, he will find himself in his proper element; and instead of confining himself to the narrow round of duties in which he moved, while his

* 1 John iii. 9.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

sole aim was to maintain a decent appearance, or to silence the clamours of conscience, he will labour to be extensively useful to others, and unweariedly active for the glory of God. The praise of man is no longer the motive which stimulates his activity ; another of a purer and more exalted kind has assumed its place, a desire for the approbation of his Maker. A reference to God in all his thoughts and actions, a regard to his authority, and love compounded of esteem, gratitude, and desire for his favour and presence, are the principles by which he is governed. There is a lofty elevation of sentiment and affection above the standard of nature, however carefully improved. He is still in the world, but he is no longer of it ; and although he attends to its affairs, and feels joy or sorrow from its changes, he gives the decided and habitual preference to nobler objects, and, like the ancient sojourners in Canaan, whose faith we are exhorted to follow, declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one. *

Regeneration is specifically the same in all who are the subjects of it, a spiritual change, the transformation of the soul into the image of God : “ That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.” † But, although every regenerated person is a new creature, and possesses all the constituent parts of the new nature, it is not necessary to maintain that, to all, the same measure of grace is communicated. They may differ from each other as children do at their natural birth, some of whom are much more lively and vigorous than others. Even at the commencement, God, according to his sovereign pleasure, may give more ample knowledge, stronger faith, and all the other virtues in a maturer state, to this man than to that. But there is no difference in respect of their state ; the same work has been performed in them all, and they are all partakers of “ that one Spirit.”

A change from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness, is necessary, not only to those who, having been educated in a false religion, must adopt new views and principles of action before they can be received into the communion of the church, and to those who, having lived long in the practice of vice, and acquired depraved habits, must reform before they can be acknowledged as Christians, but to all the descendants of

* Heb. xi. 13—16.

† John iii. 6.

Adam, whatever may have been their external advantages, and their previous character. No opinion is more unscrip-
tural, than that there are some men who do not need to be
regenerated. They may be well instructed in the principles
of religion, and may be devout and virtuous in the estimation
of the world; they may observe Divine ordinances, be just in
their dealings, sober in their personal deportment, and distin-
guished by their deeds of beneficence. Such, however, were
the Pharisees, whom our Saviour condemned with severity;
and it was in reference to them, and to other persons who re-
semble them, that he reminded us that the outside of the cup
may be clean, while within it is full of impurity. Human
nature is the same in all men, although it is subject to various
modifications from education, and temper, and the circum-
stances in which individuals are placed. Whether gentle or
fierce, placable or unmerciful, licentious or temperate, selfish
or benevolent, it is, according to the testimony of Scripture,
carnal, alienated from God, and full of enmity against his law.
The mildest and most amiable of mankind, therefore, stands
in need of regenerating grace; and if he has not experienced
its influence, is only a nominal Christian. With the aid of
external advantages, he himself may change his conduct, but
Divine grace alone can change his heart. Strange as this
doctrine may seem to those who have studied the writings of
philosophers more than the Bible, and mortifying as it is to
our pride, it is unquestionably true. Our Lord made no ex-
ception when he said, "Except a man be born of water, and
of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." *
It is worthy of attention, that these words were addressed to
a man who had received the circumcision of the flesh, had
been brought up in the true religion, and was of so respect-
able a character, that he had been elevated to the rank of a
ruler of the Jews. Hence it follows, that no man can be a
disciple of Christ, unless he have undergone this spiritual
change: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new crea-
ture;" † but, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is
none of his." ‡

The change effected in the souls of men by regenerating
grace, is the foundation of all their subsequent attainments in

* John iii. 5.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

‡ Rom. viii. 9.

religion. I mean, that they are effects or consequences of it, as the growth of a vegetable, the rising of the stem, the formation of the buds and flowers, the opening of the leaves and blossoms, and the concoction of the fruit, are the effects or consequences of the living principle in the seed. Hence an Apostle, having represented true Christians as the circumcision, or the regenerated, proceeds to state, that "they worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." * To the performance of certain functions, certain powers are necessary; and there are properties belonging to one nature which no man expects to find in another. An animal without wings could not fly, without legs could not walk, without eyes could not see, without intellect could not understand. We never look for the peculiar properties of one species of animals in another; we never look, for example, for speech and reasoning among brutes. All the actions of a living being, and all its improvements, bear a relation to the nature originally given to it by its Maker. These things are obvious, not only to philosophers, but to every person of common sense; yet, although just reasoning requires that we should transfer them to religion, men often proceed in a different manner. Religion manifestly implies a different train of sentiments, and feelings, and actions, from those which are brought into operation by the ordinary business of life. Yet many imagine that, because man has understanding, and will, and affections, is capable of managing his worldly affairs, and of performing the duties incumbent upon him as a member of society, he is fully qualified to answer the demands of religion, and requires only to have his attention directed to it, and to be roused to the exercise of his powers. It is taken for granted, that religion is one of the original principles of our nature, which it is sufficient to direct and strengthen by discipline. It is supposed that men have a natural capacity or disposition for religion, and may be trained to habits of piety and virtue by external means. Amidst these speculations, the doctrine of human depravity is forgotten or denied, and hence it is not considered that, to attempt to educe religion from our nature as it is, is as absurd as to attempt to elicit the operations of intellect

* Phil. iii. 3.

from an irrational animal. Holy actions must proceed from holy principles, and these must be created in the soul, which, since the fall, is barren of all good. Men must be regenerated before they can make progress in religion, or perform a single action which the Searcher of hearts will approve.

There are two states, in either of which every man is,—the one carnal, and the other spiritual; and his actions correspond to his state. The knowledge of a carnal man, is a cold light glimmering in his mind; his prayers are the service of the lips, or have only such animation as they derive from his natural fears and hopes; his praises are equally defective; his hearing of the Gospel is without faith, and his communicating without penitence and love; his obedience is a form without the substance. Every thing is the reverse in the case of the spiritual man; into whose duties, at least when his frame is good, there are infused the energies of a heart sanctified and moved by the Spirit of grace. He prays, and praises, and does all things in the Holy Ghost; he makes advances in holiness, and “his path is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*

These two states are essentially different; there is not a single point in which they meet, or touch each other. They are both predicable of human beings; but while the natural endowments of their respective subjects are the same in kind, their moral qualities are of opposite classes. The one is represented as in a state of non-existence, the other as in a state of being; and the change which has been effected upon the latter is called a creation. In the one state, men are dead, like those who are lying in the grave; in the other, they are alive, like those who were re-animated by our Saviour in the land of Judea, or like the saints at the last day, who will exchange corruption for incorruption. There may be an error in the conclusion which individuals draw with respect to themselves, and, from various causes, they may be unable to ascertain their own character with exactness; but between those who have, and those who have not, experienced regenerating grace, there is a radical distinction, and by the omniscient Judge they are never confounded. “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness.”†

* Prov. iv. 18.

† 1 John v. 19.

LECTURE LXVII.

ON THE UNION OF BELIEVERS TO CHRIST.

UNION OF BELIEVERS TO CHRIST FORMED IN REGENERATION.—ITS NATURE ILLUSTRATED.—IT IS REAL; SPIRITUAL; WITHOUT CONFUSION OF PERSONS; AND INDISSOLUBLE.—ITS EFFECTS.

THE design of God in calling sinners by his Word and Spirit, is to bring them to himself by Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and men, “the way, the truth, and the life.” As it is for his sake that God bestows the blessings of salvation upon us, so, according to his constitution, they can be enjoyed only in a state of connexion with him. This connexion, which is formed in regeneration, it shall be the business of the present lecture to explain.

There are two kinds of union between Christ and his people—a legal union, and a spiritual, or, as it is sometimes called, a mystical union. The reason of the latter denomination is, that the union is obscure or mysterious; but the term is not discriminative, because there are other unions to which it may be applied with equal propriety, as the union of the three persons in the Godhead, and the union of the two natures of our Saviour. Notwithstanding, however, the generality of the term, its meaning is understood in Theology, and it may continue to be used as custom has defined and limited it.

The legal union is that which was formed between Christ and his people, when he was appointed their federal head. It is a union in law, in consequence of which he represented them, and was responsible for them; and the benefit of his transac-

tions redounds to them. It may be illustrated by the case of suretiship among men. A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connexion was established between our Redeemer and those who are given to him by his Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God; and it was stipulated that, on account of his satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins. Neither could their sins have been imputed to him, nor could his righteousness have been imputed to them, if they had not been one in the eye of the law.

But something farther was necessary to the actual enjoyment of the benefits of his representation. God, on whose sovereign will the whole economy of grace is founded, had determined not only that his Son should sustain the character of their surety, but that a real, as well as a legal, relation should take place between them, as the foundation of communion with him in the blessings of his purchase. It was his will that, as they were one in law, they should be also one morally or spiritually; that his merit and grace might be imparted to them, as the holy oil poured on the head of Aaron descended to the skirts of his garments.

There are many passages of Scripture in which this connexion with Christ is represented as the foundation of our fellowship with him in spiritual and heavenly blessings. Thus, it is said that, as we were "chosen in him," so we are "accepted in the Beloved;" that in him we "obtain an inheritance," and in him "are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" that the church is his body, "and that we are baptized into Christ;" "that we are all buried with him in baptism," "and are planted in the likeness of his death and resurrection;" that "we are crucified with him," and "live with him," and that "he lives in us;" and that the earnest desire of every believer is to be found in him.* These, and many similar expressions, denote a close relation between the

* Eph. i. 4, 6, 11, 13. Col. i. 24. Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12. Rom. vi. 5, 6, 8. Gal. ii. 20. Phil. iii. 9.

Saviour and his genuine disciples; a relation more intimate than any which may be formed by external bonds.

This will be more evident, if we attend to some of the similitudes by which it is illustrated in Scripture. It is compared to the union between a tree and its branches, which constitute one whole, and possess the same principle of vegetable life: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."*—It is compared to the union between the building, and the foundation by which it is supported: "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house."†—It is compared to the union between husband and wife, who are one in the eye of the law, and have a mutual interest in the person and property of each other: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church:"‡ that is, there is a relation between Christ and the church, of which marriage is a figure. This similitude occurs in the forty-fifth Psalm, where our Saviour is represented as the king, and the church as the queen, standing at his right hand, in gold of Ophir.§—It is compared to the connexion of the head and the members of the body, which receive life and nourishment from the head, and are directed and governed by it: "But speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."§ In these similitudes, not only is there a representation of the union of Christ and believers, and of the communion which takes place between them, but it is imported, that he is the primary source of their life, and strength, and perfection.

There are three great unions mentioned in Scripture, which are totally different in kind, and should therefore be care-

* John xv. 5.

† 1 Pet. ii. 4, 6.

‡ Eph. v. 31, 32.

§ Ps. xlv. 9.

§ Eph. iv. 15, 16.

fully distinguished. The first is the union of the persons of the Trinity ; but, although the union of which we are now speaking, is compared to it in the following words of our Saviour's prayer, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us,"* yet it is only a general resemblance, consisting in the unity of the members of the body of Christ. The persons of the Godhead have one numerical essence ; whereas Christ and believers, in respect of nature, are distinct individuals. The second great union is that which subsists between the two natures of our Redeemer. They are not blended together, but are so closely conjoined, that there is only one person of Christ, and it may be said with truth, that the man is God, and God is man. But there is no such union between him and his people. And this leads me to remark, that the mystical union does not consist in community of essence, or in oneness of person, but in a close relation between different persons. It may be illustrated, but not fully, by the union between a chief or leader, and his faithful and devoted followers, who, although distinct individuals, are engaged in the same pursuits, and are animated by the same spirit, or by the same sentiments and feelings.

It is not fully illustrated, I say, by this, or by any other comparison of a similar kind. Thus, it would be a great mistake to suppose that there is no closer relation between Jesus Christ and his church, than that which subsists between a king and his subjects. This is the only relation which some persons admit. He gives his Word, and ordinances, and laws to his people, and they acknowledge his right to govern them, and obey him. But, although it should be added, that they feel all the warmth of a sincere attachment to him, yet, according to this opinion, he would be only the political head of the church ; and the difference between its relation to him, and that of subjects to their sovereign, would consist solely in the nature of the sentiments and feelings of his followers, which are of a religious kind, and in the superior value of the benefits which they expect to receive from him. The doctrine of Scripture is, that he is the head, not only of government, but of influence ; that the ties which

* John xvii. 21.

connect him and his people are invisible and spiritual ; and that the conjunction is so intimate, that he lives in them, and they live in him.

The bonds of this union are, the Spirit and faith. The Spirit being in him and in them, makes them truly one. The distance between Christ who is in heaven, and believers who are upon earth, is no obstacle, because the Spirit is omnipresent. Through his intervention, not merely a figurative, but a real union is effected ; there is one living principle in the head and the members : “ He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit ” with him.—“ By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Greeks, whether we be bond or free ; and have all been made to drink of that one Spirit.”—“ Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”—“ Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”* There is much more implied in these words than the reception of the Gospel, and the formation of a heavenly temper. They import the actual presence and inhabitation of the Spirit himself. The fact is plainly asserted ; but it is mysterious, and cannot be distinctly explained. It may be observed, in order to prevent misconception, that the presence of the Spirit with any individual, is not analogous to the presence of one man with another. He, who is willing to give his company to another, goes to the place where the other is, and, while associating with him, separates himself from those whom he does not choose to admit to the same intimacy. The coming and inhabitation of the Spirit must be understood in a different manner, because, being a Divine Person, he is omnipresent ; and, consequently, as he is incapable of change of place, he cannot withdraw from one man, and approach to another. In respect of his essence, he is as much present with unbelievers as with believers. His dwelling in the latter must therefore signify, that he manifests himself in their souls in a peculiar manner ; that he exerts there his gracious power, and produces effects which other men do not experience. Without knowing him, or being aware of his influence, other men are sustained by his power, and enabled to exercise their natural faculties ; for we must

* 1 Cor. vi. 17. xii. 13. 1 John iii. 24. iv. 13.

conceive him to be the source of life and activity throughout the whole intelligent creation : but the regenerated are the subjects of a peculiar work, by which they are transformed into the image of God. We may illustrate his presence with them, as distinguished from his presence with men in general, by supposing the vegetative power of the earth to produce, in the surrounding region, only common and worthless plants, but to throw out, in a select spot, all the riches and beauty of a cultivated garden. By the fruits of the Spirit in the heart and life of an individual, it is known that he is working silently, but powerfully, within him. Where love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, and temperance are found, there he has taken up his abode. In this way we may understand the inhabitation of the Spirit, and it seems to be the only rational idea which we can form of it. It is impossible to conceive any peculiarity in respect of his essential presence in the case of the regenerated, for he necessarily fills all places and all persons. But he works when and where he will, and is said to enter into the soul, when he begins to exert his gracious operations in it, as God is said to come to the assemblies of his people, and to dwell in Zion, because he there manifests his glory, and dispenses the blessings of his grace.

The principal bond of union between Christ and his people, is the Spirit. But, as the union is mutual, something is necessary on their part to complete it ; and this is faith. Hence, Christ is said to dwell in our hearts by faith. This faith is not merely a natural act of the mind, assenting to the truth of the Gospel, as it assents to any other truth, upon credible testimony. But it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is such a persuasion of the truth concerning the Saviour, as calls forth exercises suitable to the nature of its object. It is a cordial approbation of the Saviour, a hearty consent to his offers, an acceptance of him in his entire character, as “ made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”* Strictly, faith is an act of the understanding alone, and thus logicians would define it ; but whatever is the abstract meaning of a term, we should observe whether it is

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

used by a writer in a peculiar sense, and accommodate ourselves to his ideas, instead of rigidly adhering to our own. Here some expounders of the sacred oracles err, and explain them according to the standard of philosophy, instead of allowing them to explain themselves. If we carefully attend to the use of the word faith, in the Scriptures, we shall find that it often signifies more than an assent of the mind, and implies the concurrence of the will, or an exercise of the heart, embracing the truth believed, and trusting in the object revealed. When thus understood, it will appear to be a fit instrument for completing our union to Christ, although it might be difficult to perceive how it could have this effect, if it were merely an assent. The Scriptures, in describing faith, represent it by a variety of bodily motions and actions, to express its activity. It is called “a coming to Christ,”—“a receiving of him,”—“an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood.” When man believes with the heart, he obtains an interest in the object of his faith. Christ becomes his, according to the constitution and promise of God. He enters into covenant with him; and while he takes him as his Saviour, he devotes himself to him as one of his people. Thus the union is formed by mutual consent. Our Redeemer expresses his consent, not only in his gracious offers and declarations, but also by sending the Spirit to dwell in his heart, and the Christian expresses consent by his faith. “My Lord and my God,” is its language. “Lord, I am thine; save thou me.” If we consider the Song of Solomon, as intended to describe this union, and the intercourse founded upon it, the following words of the church are apposite to the present subject—“I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”*

From this account, it appears that it is in truth, and not merely by a figure of speech, that Jesus Christ and his disciples are said to be one. They are one, not only in sentiment and affection, by consent of mind and heart, as Nestorius is reported to have explained the union of the two natures of our Saviour, and Socinians, the union of the Father and the Son, but by a real conjunction, their persons being united to his person. The reality of the union is manifest from the similitudes by which it is illustrated; for the stones

* Sol. Song vi. 3.

are a part of the building, the branches a part of the vine, and the members a part of the body. The Spirit of Christ actually dwells in the souls of believers, and, by faith, they receive not only the benefits of Christ, but himself. Hence he is said to live in them, and they are said to abide in him. Some men treat the idea of such a union with ridicule; in their opinion, it is a dream of enthusiasm; and they confound it with the wild notions of the mystics, pronouncing what they do not see, and cannot feel, and have not experienced, to be the baseless fabric of a vision. But the humble Christian is content to believe the testimony of Scripture, and cannot withhold his assent to a fact, of which, although he is unable to explain it, the evidence which he finds in himself is conclusive. He who is led by the Spirit, enlightened, assisted, and comforted by him, cannot doubt that Christ dwells in his heart.

Let it be observed, in the next place, that it is a spiritual union. It is on this account that it is difficult to conceive it, and by some, it is rejected as imaginary. Influenced as we are by our senses, we are apt to think of it as being like the union of two material substances, by juxta-position, or by commixture; or, if we study more refinement, we may suppose it to be only like the union of two friends, in mind and affection. But, as the former union is too gross, so the latter, as we have seen, falls short of the truth. As every corporeal idea should be carefully excluded, so we must elevate our conceptions higher than the most intimate connexion which can be formed between two individuals, by the operations of intellect and will. The same Spirit lives in our exalted Redeemer, and in his people upon earth; and hence, although separated from him, and from one another, they are but one. It may seem strange to illustrate a fact by a mere creation of fancy; but if you should conceive a body composed of many parts, and those parts to be disposed of in different and distant places, but to be animated and moved by the same principle of life, you would have some idea of the union of the members of the church to Christ, and to one another, although dispersed over the face of the earth. In this case, the union would not be local, but spiritual, as it is in the other.

I remark again, that this union is without confusion. It

is a union of persons, which imports, that the parties concerned in it, continue as much distinct individuals as before. There is no communication of the properties of one to another; they are, in every respect, what they were, except that the Spirit of Christ, who is in the souls of his people, exerts an influence upon them, by which their moral nature is renewed. Incautious language has been sometimes used in speaking upon this subject. Gregory Nazianzen has employed the two terms *θεοποιεῖν* and *χριστοποιεῖν*, as if the saints were *deified*, or *christified*. What his meaning was, I pretend not to say; perhaps he intended only to express strongly the closeness of the relation, and the intimacy of the communion founded upon it; but when we do not rigidly adhere to the words of truth and soberness, they mislead others, and suggest false notions to them, into which they were in no danger of falling themselves. Such language prepared the way for the extravagancies of the mystics, who, in more modern times, have not scrupled to use the phrase of being “goddied in God,” and other expressions equally wild. But, although the union is stricter than any human relation, it has its limits necessarily arising from the nature of the parties. As our Saviour cannot participate in the infirmities of his people, except by sympathy, so they cannot participate in his Divine excellencies, which are incommunicable. Christ and they are truly united, but there does not result a unity of essence, or of person; for it is not effected immediately, but through the intervention of the Spirit, and consequently, there is no confusion of natures or persons, so that Christ is incarnate in believers, or they are deified in him.

Lastly, This union is indissoluble. We must not imagine that a man may be in Christ to-day, and out of Christ to-morrow. The union could be dissolved only by his act or by ours. There is no reason to apprehend that he will dissolve it; because he is not fickle in his attachments, apt to be disgusted, and easily irritated, but having a gracious design to accomplish, will persevere till it be completed. Those whom he loves, he loves to the end. It will not be dissolved by any act of his people. They indeed have inconstant hearts, and from their own changeableness, or from the influence of external temptations, they might renounce their connexion with

him ; but as he prays that their faith may not fail, so the Spirit dwelling in their hearts, preserves it amidst the dangers to which it is exposed. There may indeed be a temporary apostasy from Christ, in consequence of the decline of grace, or the suspension of the activity of the spiritual principle. We have an example in Peter, who disowned his Master, and disclaimed with the most solemn asseverations the character of his disciple. But even then he had not utterly lost faith ; and the impressive look by which he was awakened to repentance, as well as the affectionate treatment which he afterwards experienced, shewed that, notwithstanding his unworthy conduct, Jesus had not rejected him. We are borne out by the Scripture in maintaining, that the saints cannot fall totally or finally from grace. “ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” * The design of the Apostle is not to inform us, that external violence cannot dissolve the union of believers to Christ, for on this point there is no ground of apprehension ; but to give an assurance, that it never shall have such influence upon the minds of the saints as to prevail upon them to forsake him. His grace will keep them in the evil hour, and enable them to hold out to the end. “ They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” † Death will break all other ties, and separate the soul from the body ; but this union will not be affected by the fatal stroke. The soul will rise to heaven, and enter into the immediate presence of Christ, to enjoy more intimate fellowship with him, than was permitted in this sublunary state. The body, although lifeless, and corrupted, and reduced to dust, will still be a part of his mystical body. It is united to him even in the grave, as his human nature was united to the divine, notwithstanding the temporary separation of his soul and his body. The saints are said to “ die in the Lord,” and to “ sleep in Jesus ;” and ages after their death, God announced himself as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. ‡

The sacraments of the new covenant, are signs and seals of this union. With respect to baptism, this is evident from the

* Rom. viii. 35, 37. † John x. 28. ‡ Rev. xiv. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 14. Exod. iii. 6

words formerly quoted : “ By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.”* The subject of which the Apostle is speaking, is the union of believers to the body of Christ, and consequently to Christ himself, and while he represents it as effected by the baptism of the Spirit, he unquestionably alludes to the baptism of water as the sign. There is the same reference to this ordinance, when we are said to be “ baptised into Christ.”† The sprinkling of water in his name and by his authority, imports the application of his blood, and the communication of his Spirit to the soul ; in other words, it imports that we are brought into such a relation to him, that we have fellowship with him in the benefits of his death ; and of this fellowship union is the basis. We must first be in Christ, before we can be blessed with all spiritual blessings, as the branch must be in the vine, before it can partake of the juice which ascends from the root. The Lord’s supper has the same signification. “ We are one body,” Paul says to Christians, “ for we are all partakers of that one bread.”‡ Their joint participation of the bread is an emblem of their union, or shews that they compose one holy society having common feelings and interests. Now, if their fellowship with one another in this ordinance is a token of their union among themselves, it still more clearly demonstrates their union to Christ, as he is exhibited under the sacred symbols, which they take and use. “ The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ?” || The acts of taking and using the elements, are expressive of certain acts of the mind. They are expressive of faith, by which Christ is received, and which we have seen is the bond, on the part of the believer, by which he is united to him. The symbols of the incarnate suffering Redeemer are incorporated with our bodies by the process of digestion ; and although this is not an exact representation of the union, in which it has been shown there is no confusion or commixture of the parties, yet it is undoubtedly intended to remind us of the closeness of the connexion, by which those who were originally separate are brought together, and conjoined in the most intimate bonds. To the eye of a careless spectator, the sacra-

* 1 Cor. xii. 13. † Gal. iii. 27. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 17. || 1 Cor. xi. 16.

ments of the church may appear mere ceremonies, which are of little use, and have little meaning. But they are emblematic of one of the most important facts in the Christian religion. They are visible signs of an invisible relation, upon which the enjoyment of all spiritual privileges and blessings depends. They attest that, although Jesus Christ is in heaven, and his followers are upon earth, yet distance of place does not divide them; for that he is present with them as he is not present with the world, that he is as near to them as are the elements which are applied or received into their bodies, and that he works as efficaciously in their souls as these do in their bodies.

Among the consequences or effects of this union, we may mention in the first place, that all who belong to Christ are possessed of spiritual life. He said to his disciples, "Because I live, ye shall live also,"* and he fulfils his word by the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost. By nature they "are dead in sin;" but they are "quickened together with him,"† that is, in connexion with him, and after the example of his resurrection. As in the natural body the head is the seat of sensation, and feeling and motion are communicated to all the members by means of the nerves, which have their origin in the brain; so from him flow those influences, by which believers are endowed with moral sensibility, and perform the various functions of the Christian life. "I live," says Paul, "and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."‡ Observe how careful he is, when he represents himself as living, to put us on our guard against supposing that this state was owing to himself, and to refer his spiritual power and activity to the Saviour, who dwelt in him, and from whom he derived constant assistance by the exercise of faith. Grace in the most eminent saint, if it were left alone, would fail, like the water of a stream which is supplied only by occasional showers; but connected as it is with Christ as its source, it is like a stream from a perennial spring which always flows, although it may sometimes swell, and at other times sink. "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life."||

* John xiv. 19. † Eph. ii. 5. ‡ Gal. ii. 20. || John iv. 14.

The second effect of their union to Christ, is their communion with him in all the benefits which he purchased. "Ye are complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." * Being united to him, they enjoy an interest in his righteousness, by which he fulfilled the law in their room, and are thus entitled to the blessing of justification. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." † Hence Paul "counted all things but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith." ‡ They are adopted into the family of heaven, and made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with his Son Jesus Christ. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." § They are sanctified in soul, body, and spirit, being enabled by his grace to die more and more unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." § The outlines of the divine image, which were drawn upon their hearts in regeneration, are gradually filled up, or, in the language of an Apostle, "they are changed into it from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." ¶ Lastly, they are glorified together with him, in whom, as their head, they now sit in heavenly places. Of God he is made to them redemption, which imports deliverance from every evil, and introduction into a state of perfect and eternal felicity.

The last effect of their union to Christ which I shall mention, is their union to one another. They are one body, because they are partakers of that one Spirit. They compose a society closer and more compact than can be formed by civil institutions, or a community of interests, or the endearments of friendship. They were born in different countries, they speak different languages, they are engaged in different temporal pursuits, and are distinguished from each other by natural temper, education, condition, and other particulars ; but they are like the parts of a complicated machine,

* Col. ii. 10.

† Rom. viii. 1.

‡ Phil. iii. 8, 9.

§ John i. 12.

§ 1 Cor. vi. 11.

¶ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

which are not only externally joined together, but are acted upon by one mainspring, and perform one harmonious movement. They are united in their views of divine truth. They all believe the depravity of human nature, the divine character and atonement of the Saviour, the necessity of supernatural grace to renew and sanctify the soul. Their modes of expression on certain points may be different, but their faith is substantially the same. If there are some particulars in which they do not agree, they are inferior matters, (although unenlightened zeal may magnify their importance,) of which a man may be ignorant, and not only be safe, but enjoy uninterrupted communion with God. As they have one baptism, so they have also one faith. They are united in love. We sometimes see, it must be acknowledged, persons of whom we must entertain a favourable opinion, keeping at a distance from, and even opposing one another. In certain cases there may be good reasons for this conduct, because one of the parties is not walking according to the Gospel; but it does not always admit of this apology. Being imperfect, even saints sometimes fall out by the way without any sufficient cause, and sometimes their disputes originate in mistake. They do not know one another; they contend in the dark; they suppose the friends to be the enemies of truth. But one saint never hates another, knowing him to be a saint. He loves the image of Christ wherever he perceives it, and loves every man in whom it appears. So far as the disciples of Christ do know one another, they dwell together as brethren in unity, overlooking minor differences for the sake of the great points on which they are agreed, and their common relation to the Saviour. In a word, they are united in design. Animated by one Spirit, they have the same end in view, the glory of their Saviour, who died that they should not live to themselves, but to him. Hence we see their zeal awakened, and their powers called into action, by any object which will conduce to accomplish this design. If a spark be struck out, it increases into a flame, which spreads with rapidity from breast to breast, and from country to country, till the whole Christian world is illuminated and warmed by it. We have an example in the schemes which are at present carrying on for the circulation of the Scriptures, and the pro-

pagation of the Gospel ; and in which Christians of all denominations, laying aside party feelings, most cordially combine their counsels and their efforts. Thus, the prayer of Christ is answered, that his disciples may be one ; and we look forward to the time when the union will be more complete, and more widely extended ; when “ there shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one,” and when this prophecy shall be fulfilled, “ Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.” *

The honour to which believers have been admitted by their union to Christ should excite their gratitude, and their admiration of his condescension and grace. “ What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the son of man, that thou visitest him ? ” † “ Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth ? ” ‡ They should firmly and constantly adhere to him by faith, for he is their life and strength ; and their peace, comfort, and progressive sanctification depend upon the continuance of their relation, and the assiduity of this fellowship with him. “ Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” § In a word, they should walk worthily of their high privilege, and guard against every thing which has a tendency to separate them from him, and to impede their intercourse with him. Sin is infinitely offensive to him, and is contrary to the design with which he has united them to himself. As he who hath called them is holy, so they should be holy in all manner of conversation. “ What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own : For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” §

* Is. lii. 3.

† Ps. viii. 4.

‡ 2 Chron. vi. 18.

§ 2 Tim. ii. 1.

§ 1 Pet. i. 15.

1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

LECTURE LXVIII.

ON FAITH.

FAITH THE BOND OF UNION TO CHRIST.—DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAITH.—
SAVING FAITH ; ITS NATURE, AND QUALITIES.—JUSTIFYING FAITH DE-
FINED AND EXPLAINED.—IS ASSURANCE OF THE ESSENCE OF FAITH ?

IN illustrating union to Christ, I have shewn that the bond on our part, by which we are connected with him, is Faith. It is a fruit of the Spirit of regeneration ; and, although the soul which he has quickened begins immediately to exert itself in all the acts of spiritual life, yet faith is eminently entitled to attention, because it receives Christ, and has a direct and powerful influence upon our peace, and comfort, and sanctification. Much as it is undervalued by many, it is of indispensable necessity in religion ; and while the question has been foolishly proposed, whether faith or morality is preferable, the truth is, that the idea of separating them should not be admitted for a moment, and that, as faith without morality is a mere pretence, so morality without faith is worth nothing.

Different kinds of faith are enumerated by theological writers, and are mentioned in Scripture. The first is called historical faith, which is a simple assent to the truths of revelation, and may be found in unregenerated men, who are sometimes said to believe. It receives this denomination, not because its object is limited to the histories of Scripture, for it comprehends also the doctrines, but because it is an assent of the same kind which we give to any credible history, and is a simple act of the understanding. This is the only

faith which is produced by a rational demonstration of the truth of revelation : and hence, we may observe by the way, that those ministers who dwell much upon the evidences of religion, are chargeable with mispending their time ; because, in the first place, those whom they usually labour to convince, entertain no doubt of Christianity ; and, in the second place, although they should succeed in establishing conviction in the minds of their sceptical hearers, they would make them only such believers as were Simon Magus and many others, who perished in their sins. The second, which is called temporary faith, consists in such a persuasion of the truths of religion as is accompanied with some impression upon the conscience and affections. Of this kind is the faith of those whom our Lord compares to the seed which fell upon stony ground, and hastily sprang up, but soon withered away. It has no root ; it does not proceed from a mind enlightened, and a heart renewed by the Spirit ; and hence, when it is exposed to a severe trial, it fails. “ When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the truth, by and by they are offended.” * On this account it is called temporary faith, although in some instances it may last long, and, like the hope of the hypocrite, perish only at death, because, during the course of life, no cause occurred of sufficient force to extinguish it. The third kind of faith is called the faith of miracles ; by which is meant, a persuasion supernaturally wrought in the mind of the person, that God would perform some miracle by him, or for him. Of the former persuasion our Lord speaks, when he says to his disciples, “ If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” † To the latter persuasion he refers, when he said to two blind men, who besought him to have mercy on them, “ Believe ye that I am able to do this ? ” ‡ and it was found in the cripple at Lystra, of whom it is related, that Paul “ perceived that he had faith to be healed.” || It is evident that this kind of faith was confined to particular persons, and a particular period of the church, and consequently is not a subject of general interest. The last kind of faith is called saving faith, because by it the

* Matth. xiii. 21.

† Matth. xvii. 20.

‡ Ib. ix. 28.

|| Acts xiv. 9.

salvation offered in the Gospel is received and enjoyed. It is the design of this Lecture to explain it,—first, in general, as it respects the whole of Divine revelation; and, secondly, in particular, as it respects the offer of pardon and eternal life through the Saviour. In this view, it is commonly called justifying faith.

In speaking of faith in general, I shall direct your attention to the definition of it, which is given by Paul in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith, whether human or divine, is the belief of a testimony. The faith which we are now considering, is the belief of the testimony of God. How it operates in reference to the subjects of this testimony, whether they be considered simply as invisible, or as both invisible and future, the Apostle explains in the words which we have quoted. Of things hoped for, or future good, it is the substance. Concerning the import of the original term—*ὑποστασις*—translated *substance*, there has been a good deal of discussion, and it has been understood to signify confidence or subsistence. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for; because it assures us not only that there are such things, but that, through the power and faithfulness of God, we shall enjoy them. It is the subsistence of things hoped for; because it gives them, although future, a present subsistence in the minds of believers, so that they are influenced by them as if they were actually present. Thus the word was understood by some of the Greek commentators, who were the most competent judges of its meaning. “Since things which we hope for,” says Chrysostom, “seem not to subsist, faith gives them subsistence, or rather it does not give it, but is itself their substance. Thus, the resurrection of the dead is not past, nor does it subsist, but faith gives it subsistence in our souls.” “Faith,” says another, “gives subsistence to the resurrection of the dead, and places it before our eyes.” In human hopes, there is a mixture of uncertainty; and reason itself will, in many cases, justify anxiety; but the foundation of Christian hope being the word and promise of God, the doubts which may arise in our minds are the consequences of the weakness of our faith; for, if our faith corresponded with the nature of the testimony, we

should be as fully assured of what is future, as we are of what is present or past.

The objects of faith are not only future good, but invisible things, both good and evil, which are made known by Divine revelation ; and of these it is the evidence, *ελεγχος*, the *demonstration* or *conviction*. By our senses we become acquainted with the material world ; by consciousness we are assured of the existence of our souls and their various faculties ; and by reasoning we deduce one truth from another. But, besides these sources of information, a great part of our knowledge is derived from testimony. Thus, we know that there are cities and countries which we never saw ; that events have happened at which we were not present ; that certain persons lived in former ages, and performed certain actions ; and that there are persons now alive who have not come within the sphere of our observation. Although there is a difference between the evidence of demonstration and the evidence of testimony, yet, in particular circumstances, there is no difference in the conviction produced ; for no person in his senses entertains any more doubt that there is such a country as Greece or Italy, although he has not travelled from home, than he does of a proposition in mathematics which he fully comprehends. We depend upon testimony in matters of commerce and science, in all our ordinary transactions, and even in the important concerns of life and death. “ If, then, we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.” * In the latter case, there is no possibility of mistake or deception. Besides, his testimony relates to many things of the utmost importance, with respect to which man could give us no information,—things which eye had not seen, ear had not heard, and it had not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Of these, faith is the evidence or demonstration. Being past, and future, and invisible on account of their distance from us, or the spirituality of their nature, they cannot be discovered by our senses ; but the conviction of their reality is as strong in the mind of a believer, as if they were placed before his eyes.

This is a general account of faith, according to the definition of Paul ; but, with a view to illustrate its nature more

* 1 John v. 9.

fully and distinctly, I request your attention to the following observations.

First, The objects of religion are invisible and future, and hence arises the indispensable necessity of faith. The objects with which worldly men are conversant, are present, or are considered as not very distant; they are, or are expected soon to come, under the cognizance of their senses. Nothing seems to them to be important, which may not be seen, and felt, and enjoyed, in this sublunary state. If there be any thing which does not fall under this description, any thing which cannot be made subservient to the purposes of the present life, they regard it as a nonentity, or as a matter with which they have nothing to do. Christians are deemed enthusiasts or fools, who neglect the substance, and grasp at a shadow, dreaming of another world, which no man ever saw, instead of labouring to make themselves comfortable in this. In a certain sense, indeed, the things of this world are the objects of religion, because it regulates our conduct and affections in reference to them; but the motives, by which it influences our minds, are derived from the invisible state, and the reward, to which it teaches us to aspire, lies beyond the narrow boundary of time and sense. A Christian is a citizen of the Jerusalem above; his conversation is in heaven; he looks at the things which are not seen, and eternal; he declares plainly, that he is seeking a country, even a heavenly one; he obeys the exhortation, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." *

In the second place, Of those objects with which religion is conversant, we can have no knowledge but by Divine revelation. It is on this account that they are objects of faith. We believe that they exist, upon the testimony of God. It may be supposed that this statement of the source of religious knowledge is not strictly true, for that some parts of it, at least, are discoverable by reason. By reason, we demonstrate the existence of God, and infer a future state, in which men will be rewarded according to their works; but, without inquiring how far unassisted reason would advance in its researches, it is certain that, with respect even to these funda-

* Col. iii. 2, 3.

mental truths, it is to revelation alone that we are indebted for those views of them, which are the proper objects of religion. It is from revelation that we have derived the knowledge of that character of God, with which we, as sinners, are concerned. It is revelation which informs us that he is love; that he is merciful, and ready to forgive; that he has given his only-begotten Son for the salvation of the world; and that whosoever believes in him, shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. On these important subjects nature is silent; reason says nothing, because it is profoundly ignorant: they were so far from being suggested by meditations of the human mind, or according with its natural conceptions, that when they were first proposed, they were derided as folly. With respect to a future state, although the heathens entertained some obscure notions of it, for which, however, it is probable they were indebted more to tradition than to reasoning, it does not admit of a doubt that, without revelation, we should not have had the faintest idea of the heaven of Christianity, and should have known nothing concerning the means by which admission into it is obtained. It is the unrivalled glory of Jesus Christ, that "he hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." * Our religion is a free gift of God to our sinful race. It originated in the purpose which he purposed in himself before the beginning of time, and into which no man or angel could have pried; it is delivered to us in the Scriptures, which were not written by the will of man, but at the suggestion, and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit; and like some other gifts of God, it has not yet been imparted to all men, but, in the exercise of his sovereignty, has been granted to one nation, and withheld from another.

In the third place, Faith is an assent to the revelation which God has made of the truths of religion. We assent to a testimony, when we are persuaded of the veracity of the testifier, into which our faith is resolved. But, while this is a general definition of faith, it varies its aspect, if I may speak so, according to the subject of the testimony. When the testimony relates to a matter of indifference, a fact in which we take no interest, the assent is very slight, and may be called

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

simple belief. But if the subject come home to our business and bosoms, a stronger impression is made. When a person, for example, is in distress or danger, and the testimony informs him of some generous friend, who is both able and willing to deliver him, and is exerting his power for his relief, the act of the mind rises higher than simple belief, and is properly denominated trust or confidence. If we are looking forward with desire to an object, the possession of which will make us happy, and the testimony assures us that we shall obtain it, expectation is added to desire, and both united constitute hope. When we attend to the nature of the Christian religion, and consider that the subjects of which it treats are of infinite importance, that it exhibits the character of God in its grandest and most interesting features, displays all the miracles and blessings of redemption, and directs our views to the realities of eternity, we perceive that the faith which it demands must be very different from a cold naked assent. It being admitted, that a faith corresponding to the nature of the things revealed, implies the concurrence of the heart, as well as the conviction of the understanding, it will be easily conceded that its existence is rare. There are many who profess to believe the Gospel, and who do believe it in this sense, that they entertain a vague and confused notion of its truth; but their faith is merely a careless passive assent. They have been told that it is true, and perhaps have given attention to the evidences by which its truth is established, and they feel no disposition to call it in question. There is no particular reason why they should controvert the evidence, because they regard the subject as a mere speculation, which they are under no necessity of reducing to practice; there are several reasons which incline them to yield to it, as the prejudices of education, the wishes of their friends, a regard to character and to their worldly interests. They do not enter into a close examination of the subject, nor institute an inquiry, whether their assent be sincere and cordial. They are not infidels in the common acceptation of the word, and therefore they are believers. But their faith is totally different from a practical conviction. It has no influence upon their hearts; and were they tried by the standard of Scripture, or even by the laws of reason and common sense, it would be

found that they do not really believe those truths, of which they probably think that they never entertained a doubt.

In the fourth place, Faith conveys to the mind a full conviction of the truths of religion. It is the substance, or confident expectation of things hoped for, the evidence or demonstration of things not seen. The ground of this conviction of the existence, and nature, and importance of its objects, is the infallible testimony on which it depends. What God has attested must be true, because, being omniscient, he cannot be mistaken, and being holy, he will not deceive. It may be objected, that this assurance, which is said to belong to faith, is not always found in believers, and that they are sometimes disturbed with doubts. The fact cannot be denied ; but it is not at variance with the definition formerly given, which merely describes what faith is in itself, and what it ought to be in our experience. We should reflect that, like other graces, it subsists in imperfect beings, and has to contend with difficulties, by which its full exercise is impeded. Consciousness of personal demerit, and of the remains of sin in the heart, the appearances of Providence which seem to be opposed to the declarations and promises of Scripture, the temptations of Satan, and the suspension of Divine influences for the sins into which they have fallen, may involve Christians in mental distress, and lead them to call in question truths to which, in their happier hours, they yielded an unwavering assent. “ O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ? ” * When these obstacles are removed, and the believer fixes his undivided attention upon the faithfulness of God, he feels the same assurance of the truths of religion, however mysterious, and however contrary to the natural suggestions of the mind, which he does of his own existence, or of that of the material world. No conviction could be stronger than that of Abraham, when, without hesitation, he offered up Isaac, upon whose life the promises depended, and yet continued to hope for the blessings exhibited in them ; and when he confidently expected a son, although he himself was old, and his wife was barren, and the time of child-bearing was past. This was faith in its highest state. It is proposed for our imitation ; and as it is implied,

* Matth. xiv. 31.

that the same trust in God is attainable by others, so there is no reason to doubt that many have trodden, and are still treading, in the steps of that illustrious man, and are glorifying God by an unqualified dependence on his Word.

Lastly, Through faith the truths of religion exert an influence upon the mind, as if they were perceived by the senses. It considers them as realities, and is suitably affected by them. It has been said that, if the solemn and awful scenes which revelation describes were actually disclosed to view, the sight would overwhelm us, and all worldly affairs would be suspended as too insignificant to engage our attention. This may be true; and it may have been for this reason the will of God, that, in this sublunary state, we should walk by faith and not by sight. Yet such is the assurance of the existence and magnitude of invisible things which faith produces, that they not only excite powerful emotions in the hearts of believers, and give a new direction to their conduct, but they often make a stronger impression upon them than is made by the things which are visible and present. Hence, they renounce the pleasures of sin for the happiness promised by religion; and abandon the world as their portion, in the expectation of the heavenly inheritance. The sacrifices which a Christian has often made, of his will, his ease, his honour, his wealth, his country, his friends, and even of his life, are proofs of the mighty power of faith. These are the trophies which adorn its triumphs. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."*

Thus far I have given you an account of faith in general, as it respects the whole revelation contained in the Scriptures, and makes all the doctrines and facts recorded in them bear upon the mind, so as to promote our conformity to the will of God, and our final salvation. Being founded upon his testimony, it respects every thing which he has attested, and improves it for the purpose which it was intended to serve. It is conversant with things past, as well as with things to come, with things awful and alarming, as well as with those which are calculated to impart peace and consolation to the soul. By faith, we are assured of the threatenings of the law, as well as of the promises of the Gospel; we are moved

* 1 John v. 4.

with fear, as well as animated with hope. It is of great utility and indispensable necessity to the Christian, in the present life ; it excites him to the performance of his duty, and supports him in adversity, and fortifies his mind against temptation. “ The people that know their God, are strong, and do exploits.”* They resist the assaults of Satan whether violent or insidious, overcome the allurements and terrors of the world, and persevere to the end in a course of holy obedience.

I now proceed to speak of justifying faith, or the faith by which a sinner obtains an interest in Jesus Christ, and the blessings of salvation. Let it be observed, that it is not different in its nature from the faith already described, for it is the same grace which operates in the believer, whatever is the object upon which it is fixed. It is called justifying faith, on account of the design to which it is subservient ; and, in this view, its exclusive object is that part of revelation which relates to the Saviour, or the Gospel, strictly so called.

The first remark which I make is, that the object of justifying faith is Jesus Christ, and redemption through his blood. Paul said to the jailor of Philippi, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”† The person addressed was a sinner, convinced and alarmed, dreading the vengeance of his Maker, and anxiously inquiring how he might be delivered from it. The words are an answer to his question, and must, therefore, point out the object which alone could dispel his fears, and inspire him with hope. This design can be accomplished only by the revelation of a Saviour, or by the Gospel as distinguished from the Law. The faith of the law an awakened sinner already possesses, for his fears proceed from his belief that it is holy and just, and that its threatenings will be executed upon those who have transgressed it, unless they find out some method of escaping its penalty. Nothing will relieve the mind of a criminal condemned to die, but authentic information that his sovereign is willing to pardon him ; and nothing will set free the convinced sinner from the terror which he feels, but the knowledge of the mercy of God, through the mediation of his Son. The object, then, of justifying faith is Christ crucified,—

* Dan. xi. 32.

† Acts xvi. 31.

Christ lifted up on the cross, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness,—Christ as having borne our sins in his own body on the tree, his blood shed as a propitiation for sin, and the everlasting righteousness which he brought in as the foundation of hope to those who had no hope in themselves. It is false and foolish to suppose, that men may be saved by faith in God as their Creator, and Preserver, and Lawgiver. If they considered him in no other light, and understood the full import of these characters, they would perceive that he is inaccessible to the guilty, a consuming fire, the avenger of such as do evil. It is in the Gospel only, that a sinner will find those views of his character, which will quiet the agitation of his mind, and hold out encouragement to return to him. He will never look to his Maker with comfort and hope, till he behold him in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to men. There is no other refuge from his wrath, but the atonement.

Secondly, To the revelation of the Saviour in the Gospel, the awakened sinner, under the influence of the Spirit, yields a cordial assent; and this act of his mind is therefore denominated faith. Faith is the belief of a testimony; and it is called human faith, when its object is the testimony of man, divine faith, when its object is the testimony of God. The cold and listless assent, which is every day given to the Gospel, by thousands who take no interest in it, and are in no degree influenced by it in their practice, if it be called faith at all, is evidently inferior to the faith of devils, who “believe and tremble,” while those persons believe and disregard. The awakened sinner is under the conduct of the Spirit, who presents the Gospel to his mind with an evidence which has all the force of demonstration. To this internal revelation, this illumination of the mind by supernatural grace, the Scriptures refer, when they speak of “the opening of the blind eyes,” and of the coming of the Gospel “in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”* It is impossible to describe the operations of the mind, so as to render them intelligible to those by whom they have not been experienced; but we can all conceive the difference between the assent that we give to a truth, which we have not properly con-

* Acts xxvi. 18. 1 Thess. i. 5.

sidered and about which we feel no concern, and our assent to a truth which we understand, and know to be intimately connected with our interests. Such is the difference between the faith of nominal Christians, and the faith by which we are saved. The latter is founded on clear perceptions of the truth, and excellence, and infinite importance of the Gospel. An evidence accompanies it, which dispels all doubts, removes all objections, and creates the highest assurance ; Christ crucified is seen to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. The Gospel appears to be worthy of all acceptance, because it is so admirably adapted to the circumstances of men, and redounds so much to the glory of God. It bears upon it the signature of Heaven. It is the truth, and in the judgment of the enlightened sinner, the only truth which deserves his attention. This is the "excellent knowledge of Christ," for which he is willing to count all things loss.*

Thirdly, Faith implies the reliance or dependence of the soul upon Jesus Christ for salvation. The sinner not only assents to the testimony of God concerning his Son as true, but regards it as worthy of all acceptance. Some indeed, as I remarked in a former lecture, make faith consist in simple assent, because this is the strict and logical definition of the term, and consequently consider it as an act of the understanding alone. But as the Scriptures make use of new words and phrases to express new ideas, so they employ some old words in a sense peculiar to themselves ; and we should proceed with them as we do with any other book, when we endeavour, by comparing one passage with another, to ascertain the meaning of a particular term which occurs in it. That in the phraseology of Scripture, faith is not simply an assent of the understanding, but implies an act of volition accepting the Saviour and confiding in him, is evident from the metaphorical terms by which it is described. It is called a receiving of Christ, a coming to him, a fleeing for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood. These terms import such motion or activity as the soul exerts, when it not only contemplates, but desires and embraces the good which is presented to it. In the Old Testament, faith is called trusting in the Lord. Now

* Phil. iii. 8.

we know, that to trust in a person, is not merely to believe that he is able and willing to deliver us from danger and distress, and to bestow favours upon us, but to accept his proffered assistance, and to commit our interest to his care and disposal. If we reflect upon the situation of a sinner when he believes, we shall more distinctly perceive what is, and naturally must be, the exercise of his mind. Finding himself condemned by the law of God and his own conscience, and disappointed in his endeavours to relieve himself, by his prayers, and tears, and fasts, and good works, how is he affected when Jesus Christ is revealed as the only Saviour from sin? Is he not like the drowning man, who eagerly grasps the plank thrown out to support him; or like the manslayer, who, seeing the avenger of blood close at his heels, ran for safety into the city of refuge? He does not content himself with saying, 'the blood of Christ is infinitely meritorious, and happy should I be, if I could share in the blessings procured by it.' This, we need not doubt, devils could say, for they are aware of the efficacy of his sacrifice, and would rejoice if it were possible to be delivered by it from torment. He farther says, 'I desire to be sprinkled with his blood, that, like the Israelites in Egypt, I may escape, when the wrath of God shall go forth against his enemies. I place my hope upon the great Atonement, by which the justice of heaven has been appeased; I will draw near to God, pleading the merit of his Son; I will present to him his all-perfect righteousness, of which he has testified his high approbation.' It remains, that faith is an acquiescence in the plan of redemption through the mediation of Christ, a reliance upon him as our Saviour, and consequently, that, if there has not been a concurrence of mind and heart in receiving the testimony of the gospel, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins.

Lastly, Faith implies the renunciation of our own righteousness as the foundation of our hope. This is an obvious inference from the preceding remarks, without attention to which the nature of faith will not be understood. It is not a partial, but an unreserved reliance upon Christ for salvation. To believe, is not to call upon him to assist us in what we have commenced and carried on to a certain extent, but from a consciousness of our utter inability even to begin, to commit

the work of our salvation wholly to him. This is the test of genuine faith. That is the faith of God's elect, which leads away the sinner from himself to the Saviour, fixes his undivided attention upon the cross, and derives his peace and hope solely from the sacrifice which was offered upon it. It is a spurious faith, which, forming a treacherous alliance with good works, attempts to introduce them as a partial cause of our acceptance with God. "To him that worketh," says Paul, "the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." * These words are worthy of attention. To work and to believe are opposed to each other. He who believes does not work, that is, he does not work that he may live, perform duties with a view to obtain the divine favour, associate his own obedience with that of our Redeemer as the ground of his justification. He simply believes, that is, he receives the testimony of God concerning his Son, and expects salvation through him alone. It is on this account that true faith is so rare. Men would not object to the aid of Jesus Christ, so far as their own power is insufficient to save them ; but to depend upon him to the exclusion of all their own qualifications and good deeds, to owe every thing to him, and to have nothing left of which they may boast as their own,—all this is so contrary to the natural bias of the heart, so mortifying to pride, so destructive of our schemes for appearing respectable in our own eyes, and maintaining what we falsely call the dignity of human nature, that at first we all revolt from it with secret indignation, and will not submit to the humiliating plan, till we have been prepared by the discipline of the law, and the grace of the Gospel. It is the office of faith to receive Christ, as he is revealed in the Scriptures. He is offered freely, and we must receive him without presenting any price in exchange. He is exhibited as the only Saviour ; and to receive him as such, is to trust, neither in the merits of any saint, nor in the intercession of any angel, nor in our own repentance and obedience, but in him, whose arm brought us salvation, and who claims the undivided glory of a work, which he accomplished without an associate. To believe, is to submit to the righteousness of

* Rom. iv. 4, 5.

God ; it is to desist from our vain attempts to establish our own righteousness, and to say, " In the Lord have we righteousness and strength." *

What has been said concerning faith in general, and justifying faith in particular, is conformable to the doctrine of our Church. " By this faith," says our Confession, " a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein ; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth ; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." †

When the question is proposed, whether assurance is of the essence of faith, it is necessary, before we return an answer, to know what is meant by assurance. If it mean a full persuasion of the truth of the Divine testimony, to whatever subject it relates, we answer, that it is essential to faith. Faith is not a doubting, hesitating assent, but " the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The Christian is firmly persuaded of every doctrine and fact which God has attested, and of every promise which he has made. He believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners ; that his death was an atonement for guilt ; that there is redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins ; that he is freely offered to him and others in the Gospel, and that every man who trusts in him shall be saved. But if assurance mean an explicit assurance of our own salvation, we deny that it is of the essence of faith.

In opposition to Papists, who made faith consist in an assent to the truth of the Scriptures in general, and denied that any man could be certain of his final salvation, the Reformers represented it as a firm persuasion, that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. The founders of our religious society adopted this notion, and in one of their public deeds, ‡ have defined faith to be a persuasion on the part of the sinner, that Christ is his, that what he did

* Is. xlv. 24. † Confes. ch. xiv. §. 2. ‡ Act of Assoc. Pres. 21st Oct. 1742.

and suffered he did and suffered for him, and that he shall have life and salvation by him. It may be questioned whether, in avoiding one extreme, they have not run into another; or, at least, have not employed language, which must be explained and qualified, in order to make it accord with the truth. A sinner cannot say, in the first instance, Christ is mine in possession; because this becomes true only when he has believed, and cannot belong to the nature of faith, as it is a consequence of it. If the words mean only, that Christ is his in the offer of the Gospel, or is offered to him in particular, we allow it, but have a right to complain, that a fact about which there is no dispute, should be expressed in terms which are apt to suggest a quite different sense. The sinner cannot say till he have believed, that Christ died for him, unless he died for all men without exception; but, consistently with the doctrine of particular redemption, no man can be assured that he was one of the objects of the sacrifice of the cross, unless he have first obtained an interest in it by faith. Neither can every sinner say, in the first moment of faith, that he shall certainly have eternal salvation. He desires salvation no doubt, and his faith implies an expectation of it; but how many believers have been harassed with doubts at first, and during the whole course of their lives, and have rarely been able to use the language of confidence! This the advocates of this definition are compelled to admit; and it is curious to observe how, in attempting to reconcile it with their system, they shift and shuffle, and almost retract, and involve themselves in perplexity and contradiction, as those must do who are labouring to prove that, although it is a fact that many believers are not assured of their salvation, yet assurance is of the essence of faith. It is manifest that, if assurance is of the essence of faith, it can never be separated from it.—The exercise of faith is regulated by the word of God, and its object is there defined. But it is nowhere revealed in the Scriptures, that Christ died for any particular person, and that his sins are forgiven. How, then, can an assurance of these things belong to the nature of faith? How can it be our duty to believe what is not in the testimony? It is an objection against this definition, that it makes faith consist rather in the belief of something regarding ourselves,

than in the belief of the testimony of God; in the belief of the goodness of our state, rather than of the all-sufficiency and willingness of Christ. It may be farther objected, that it confounds the inferences from faith with faith itself; nothing being plainer than that these propositions, ‘Christ died for me,’ ‘my sins are forgiven,’ are conclusions to which the mind comes, from the previous belief of the doctrines and promises of the Gospel. Farther, it is chargeable with this error, that it defines faith in its highest and most perfect state, and excludes the lower degrees of it, and thus lays a stumbling-block before thousands of the people of God, who, not finding in themselves this assurance, are distressed with the melancholy thought that they are unbelievers. Although adopted by our fathers, it is contrary to the doctrine of our standards, to which only we are bound to conform, and in which it is expressly said, “This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it.” * In a word, this definition of faith has been rejected by many of the greatest divines. I shall mention only one, the learned and pious Bishop Davenant, who observes, in his work entitled *Determinationes Quæstionum quarundam Theologicarum*, that the word confidence or assurance has two meanings. It signifies the act of resting upon, and adhering to Jesus Christ, by which we embrace him as with both our arms, and seek to obtain pardon, grace, and glory from the Father. Justification follows this act, whether the sinner be fully persuaded of the remission of his sins or not. But sometimes it denotes an effect consequent to justification, namely, the full persuasion and lively sense of pardon, and the favour of God. We confess, he says, that this confidence or assurance is not justifying faith, but its daughter, and that the justified soul is not wont to obtain it, but after many exercises of faith and holiness.

It is admitted, that an assurance of salvation is attainable in the present life. An Apostle exhorts Christians “to make their calling and election sure.” † The exhortation implies that they may not be assured of the goodness of their state, for no man would be exhorted to seek what he already possesses,

* Conf. ch. xviii. §. 3.

† 2 Pet. i. 10.

and, consequently, that this persuasion is not found in every believer, as it would be if it belonged to the nature of faith. They are called upon to examine themselves, whether they be in the faith ; but this would be unnecessary, if there were an evidence in faith itself which satisfied the mind. The assurance of which we speak, is not obtained by the direct act of faith, but by reflection. It is the result of evidence, collected by observation and inquiry, that the person is possessed of the faith to which salvation is promised. It is "founded," our Church says, "upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God ; which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption." * By many theological writers this assurance has been called the reflex act of faith, but with manifest impropriety. It is not an act of faith, but a process of reasoning founded upon faith, and may be reduced to a regular syllogism : Every man who believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved ; but I have believed in Christ, as is proved by the operations of Divine grace in my heart ; therefore I shall be saved. The major of this proposition is a matter of faith, because it is a revealed truth ; the minor is a matter of experience ; and the conclusion is of a mixed nature, partaking of the character of both. It is more accurate to call it the assurance of sense, because it is founded on our feelings and dispositions. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." †

It is evident, from the preceding account, that "faith is not of ourselves, but is the gift of God." ‡ Without particular assistance, we may assent to the Gospel, upon perceiving the evidence of its truth ; but, unless our minds be enlightened, and our hearts be renewed by Almighty grace, we will not cordially embrace it, and comply with its design,

* Conf. chap. xviii. §. 2.

† 1 John iii. 14, 19—21.

‡ Eph. ii. 8.

by placing our whole dependence upon Christ, and renouncing every other foundation of hope. Faith is an act, not of the carnal, but of the regenerated man. This important truth we should always bear in mind, that we may seek faith from Him who only can bestow it; and, if we have obtained it, may give all the praise and glory to God. It is explicitly laid down by our Lord in the following words: "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."*

* John vi. 44.

LECTURE LXIX.

ON THE PRIVILEGES OF BELIEVERS: JUSTIFICATION.

IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE.—MEANING OF THE TERM, JUSTIFICATION.—THE AUTHOR AND SUBJECTS OF JUSTIFICATION.—IMPLIES THAT A SINNER IS PARDONED, AND ACCOUNTED RIGHTEOUS.—GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION, NOT THE WORKS OF THE LAW.

THE subject which we are now to consider is entitled to the most serious attention, on account of the important place which it holds in the system of religion. To a man who acknowledges himself to be a sinner, no inquiry is so interesting as that which relates to the means of his restoration to the favour of God; and, if he is thoroughly convinced of his guilt and danger, he will find no rest till he has obtained a satisfactory answer to it. Till this point is decided, all other information respecting religion will be unavailing. Demonstrations of the existence of God will only serve to confirm, and more deeply impress upon his mind, the awful truth which he already believes, that there is a righteous Judge, before whom he must appear, and by whose sentence his final doom will be fixed. To explain the moral law to him, and inculcate the obligations to obey it, will be to act the part of a public accuser, when he quotes the statutes of the land in order to shew that the charges which he has brought against the criminal at the bar are well founded, and, consequently, that he is worthy of punishment. The stronger the arguments are by which you evince the immortality of the soul,

the more clearly do you prove that his punishment will not be temporary, and that there is another state of existence, in which he will be fully recompensed according to his desert. Hence you perceive how defective is not only natural religion, but that spurious Christianity, the publication of which Unitarians affirm to have been the sole design of the mission of our Saviour. There is nothing in a pure morality, and the doctrine of the resurrection and a future state, to relieve the mind of a sinner.

It is the glory of the Gospel, that it reveals the method according to which a sinner may obtain peace with his Maker, and may rise to the possession of eternal life. It resolves the important question, how a man may be just with God. But although the information which it gives on this subject is sufficiently clear, it may be misapprehended, through carelessness and prejudice; and, accordingly, we find that there has been, and still is, a diversity of opinion among professed Christians with respect to the ground of acceptance. An error upon this point is fundamental; for, as there is only one way to heaven, if we miss it and take another, it is certain that we shall not arrive at that happy place. If we entertain right views of the doctrine of justification, we cannot go far wrong with respect to any other essential truth of Christianity; but a mistake here will affect the whole system, and give rise to false conceptions of the character of God, of the mediation of Christ, of the law, of the Gospel, of grace, and of works. It was justly termed by Luther, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*, the article of a standing or falling church; because, according to the views which are adopted in any church with respect to the means of regaining the favour of God, true piety and holiness will flourish or decline in it. I may add, that it was eminently through the preaching of the scriptural doctrine of justification, that the reformation from Popery was effected. The light of this truth discovered to men the abominations of Antichrist, and made them renounce the merit of good works, the efficacy of fasts, and pilgrimages, and penances, the intercession of saints and angels, the sacrifice of the mass, and all the other tenets by which the mediation of Christ had been virtually set aside, and sinners had been led to rest their hope upon a foundation of sand.

It is necessary, in the first place, to ascertain the meaning of the term justification. It is a Latin word, which however is not of classical authority, and is found, I believe, only in the works of ecclesiastical writers. If we explain it according to the laws of etymology, it will signify the making of a person just, as sanctification signifies the making of a person holy. Hence some of the ancients were misled with regard to the meaning of the term, and confounded justification with sanctification. The Church of Rome has fallen into this same error. The justification of a sinner is declared by the Council of Trent to be “not only the remission of sin, but also sanctification and the renovation of the inward man, by which a person who was unjust is made just, and instead of an enemy becomes a friend, so that he is an heir according to the hope of eternal life.—The formal cause of it is the righteousness of God, not that by which he is himself righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous ; and by which, bestowed upon us as his gift, we are renewed in the spirit of our mind, and are not only accounted, but are truly called, and are righteous, receiving each of us righteousness in ourselves according to our measure, which the Spirit distributes to every man as he wills, and according to the peculiar disposition and co-operation of every man.” The Council then proceeds to enact the following decree:—“If any man shall say that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or solely by the remission of sins to the exclusion of grace and charity which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, and is inherent in them, or even that the grace by which we are justified is only the favour of God, let him be accursed.”* This is called the first justification, and it is said to be by faith, in a sense, however, which does not altogether exclude merit and predisposing qualifications. The second justification is said to be by works, performed by the aid of the grace which was infused in the first.

Justification is a forensic term, which denotes not a change of a person's dispositions, but a change of his state in relation to the law. It does not make him righteous by an infusion of holy habits, but pronounces him righteous on valid grounds. This appears from many passages to be the meaning of the

* Concil. Trident. Sess. vi. Decret. et Canon, *de justificatione*.

Hebrew word עָרַךְ, and the Greek word δικαιω. “If there be a controversy among men, and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”* To justify the righteous is not to make him, but to pronounce him, righteous upon proof of his innocence, and of the goodness of his cause. For this alone is the office of a judge. “To justify the wicked,” signifies to pronounce him just, or to acquit him in judgment, and is declared to be an “abomination to the Lord,”† as it is to condemn the righteous, or pronounce him to be guilty. “He is near that justifieth me; and who is he that will contend with me?”‡ These are the words of our Saviour, and refer to the sentence of his Father, by which he was acquitted from every false charge brought against him by his enemies, as well as from the demands of law and justice which he had fully satisfied. The word is evidently used in the same sense when the Psalmist says, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”|| He is speaking to God as his Judge, and he entreats that he may not be brought to trial; because neither he nor any other person could expect a sentence in his favour.

In the New Testament, the word δικαιουν always bears a forensic sense, or a sense closely connected with it, importing not to make, but to pronounce righteous. When wisdom is said to be “justified of her children,”§ the meaning is, that she is approved or vindicated by them, exhibited in her true character, and cleared from the aspersions of her enemies. The man who is desirous to justify himself, is a man who is eager to prove that there is no defect in his obedience. Of this description were the Pharisees, who maintained that men were accepted by God on the ground of their good works, and made a shew of righteousness before the world. “Ye are they that justify yourselves before men.”¶ The publican went down to his house “justified,”** that is, acquitted and pardoned by God, whose mercy he had humbly implored. “The doers of the law shall be justified,”†† that is, they and they alone shall be esteemed righteous by the law, or rather

* Deut. xxv. 1. † Prov. xvii. 15. ‡ Is. l. 8. || Ps. cxlii. 2.
§ Matth. xi. 19. ¶ Luke xvi. 15. ** Ib. xviii. 14. †† Rom. ii. 13.

by the Lawgiver. The forensic sense of justification is manifest from its being opposed to condemnation. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" "Judgment was by one to condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto justification."*

It is unnecessary to multiply proofs, as the matter is abundantly plain. Justification is a change, not of our nature, but of our state. Those who are justified are also regenerated; but the two privileges, although inseparable, are perfectly distinct.

The Author of justification is God. "It is God that justifieth." The person to be justified is accountable to him as his Creator and Lawgiver, and by his sentence he must stand or fall. In this transaction he sustains the character of the guardian of the law, who will take care, if I may speak so, that its authority shall not be subverted, and its rights be violated by any sentence which he may pronounce in favour of its subjects; and of the God of grace, who receives into favour those whom he might have justly excluded from his presence. It is said, indeed, in the Book of Daniel, that "they who turn many to righteousness," or literally, who justify many, "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."† But their justification of others is merely ministerial, and must be understood of their agency under God in bringing men to that faith through which they are justified. In the same way we must explain those words of Christ, which seem to put the power of eternal life and death into the hands of his Apostles: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."‡ If there is no reference to the miraculous gift of discerning spirits, by which they could certainly judge of the state of individuals, and pronounce a sentence upon them which would be ratified in heaven, nothing further can be intended than that, as preachers of the word, they were authorised to declare the characters of those who should be justified, and of those who should be condemned, to assure believers of eternal life, and unbelievers of eternal death.

The person who is justified is a sinner. God "justifieth the ungodly."|| He is considered as one who has violated the law,

* Rom. viii. 33, 34. v. 16. † Dan. xii. 3. ‡ John xx. 23. || Rom. iv. 5.

and the design of the sentence is to set him free from the consequences of transgression. If he were not a sinner, he would be under no necessity to make anxious inquiries respecting the means of restoration to the favour of the Lawgiver. He would be already justified, for God always beholds the righteous with a pleasant countenance.

“Those whom God effectually calleth,” says our Confession of Faith, “he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous.”* Although justification is represented as a single act, and is commonly spoken of as a single blessing, yet it consists, according to this definition, of more parts than one, to which, when attempting to explain its nature, we must separately direct our attention. The person to be justified is a sinner; and justification is a sentence declaring him to be just in the eye of the law. Two things are necessarily involved in this sentence; first, that he is acquitted from every charge of transgression which is brought against him by the law; and secondly, that he is accounted to have fulfilled, or on some ground treated as if he had fulfilled, its demands.

Justification implies the acquittal of the justified person from the charges of the law. It may here be observed, that the person in whose favour a legal sentence is pronounced, may be viewed as innocent or guilty. If he is innocent, the law acquits him, by declaring the charge to be unfounded, or, in the language of Scripture, by “bringing forth his righteousness as the noon-day.” It is impossible that a trial on false grounds can take place at the tribunal of God; but cases of this kind frequently occur in human courts of justice. If he is guilty, as all those are who obtain the blessing of which we are speaking, the law grants him a pardon, or, to express myself more accurately as pardon is not the act of a law, he is forgiven by the Lawgiver, or the person in whose hands the administration of justice and mercy is lodged.

The pardon of sin consists in the absolution of the sinner from the obligation to punishment under which he was lying. This is the nature of remission, whether it refer to crimes committed against the law of God, or to crimes committed

* Westm. Conf. ch. xi. § 1.

against the laws of men. Obedience is not merely recommended to us in the way of counsel, which leaves a person to act as he may think proper, but is enjoined by authority, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." * As soon, therefore, as a man transgresses the commandment, he becomes guilty, or, in other words, he is liable to the penalty, and bound to suffer it by the sentence of the Lawgiver. To pardon this man, is to declare, upon grounds which will be afterwards specified, that, although he has violated the law, it shall not have its course upon him; that he shall be exempted from the fatal effects of his transgressions, and be treated as if he were innocent. Remission places him in the same relation to the law as if he had not sinned. He is no more under a sentence of condemnation than Adam was before his fall. As one sin subjects the offender to the penalty, if God should enter into judgment with him, it would be impossible that he could escape, since his sins are numerous as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea-shore. But God will not enter into judgment with him, nor listen to any of the charges which the law or his conscience may advance, because his justice has received full satisfaction for all his acts of disobedience. Hence the Scriptures employ a variety of metaphorical expressions to show that the guilt of pardoned sin is completely cancelled, and that those who are forgiven are secured against every penal evil. God is said to have "blotted out their sins;" "not to remember them;" to have "cast them behind his back;" to have "cast them into the depths of the sea;" "not to impute them;" and they are represented as so hidden, that when they are "sought for, they shall not be found." † It is evident that these things must be understood, not literally, but as alluding to the various ways in which an object may be concealed from the eyes of men, or banished from their minds. They intimate that, although the sins are ever present to the knowledge of God, who being infinitely holy must always view them with abhorrence, yet he will deal with believ-

* Gal. iii. 10. † Is. xlv. 22. xliii. 25. xxxviii. 17. Micah vii. 19. Ps. xxxii. 2. Jer. 1. 20.

ers in the same gracious manner as if he had forgotten their offences, and they were actually removed out of his sight. Hence, it has been said that God beholds no sin in believers. The proposition gave rise to controversy, and we cannot wonder that it did so, as it is expressed in a paradoxical form. If it mean that, literally, God sees no sin in them, it would be false, because he knows them to be chargeable with many transgressions; but nothing more is intended than that he sees in them no obligation to punishment, no ground on which he may proceed against them as a judge. This is a Scriptural truth, which ought to have been expressed in plain and simple terms; no good purpose could be gained by throwing it into a form calculated to surprise and perplex. We may say of this and some other paradoxes relative to the same subject, which caused much discussion more than a hundred years ago,—such as, that believers contract no new guilt by new crimes; that God is not offended by their sins; that confession, and repentance, and prayer, are not necessary to pardon; we may say of them that, if not altogether false, they are a pitiful play upon words; and that, while the sentiments which they were meant to convey, so far as agreeable to Scripture, might be defended, the language ought to have been universally condemned. It is a poor employment to turn the doctrines of religion into riddles.

Such, then, is the nature of remission. It delivers the guilty from the curse of the law; it places those who were devoted to destruction in a state of safety; it averts the judgments which were hanging over their heads, and threatened to overwhelm them for ever. They may confidently say, “O Lord, we will praise thee: though thou wast angry with us, yet thine anger is turned away, and thou hast comforted us.” * Sin, although a deadly poison, cannot now destroy them, because an effectual antidote has been administered. Its influence, indeed, is pernicious, and they should guard against it with the utmost circumspection, because it will pollute their souls, disturb their peace, and displease their heavenly Father; but, although it may subject them to chastisements, it will never expose them to his avenging wrath: “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” †

* Is. xii. 1.

† Rom. viii. 1.

The pardon which is granted in justification is full, extending to all the transgressions of the guilty persons: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." * That law appointed sacrifices for many offences, but there were some for which no atonement was provided. The sacrifice of Christ was an atonement for sins of every kind and degree. Hence, in the Gospel a promise of pardon is made to every man who believes, without any exception; and if there is one sin which shall not be forgiven, it is excepted, not because there was not sufficient virtue in the blood of Christ to expiate it, but because it consists in a deliberate and wilful rejection of his sacrifice, so that the unhappy man is in the same condition with the patient under a dangerous disease, who will not take the only medicine which could cure him, and is therefore abandoned by his physician. With respect to past and present sins, there is no doubt that they are immediately remitted, so that the only question relates to those of which the believer may be afterwards guilty. To some it has appeared improper to say, that they also are forgiven as soon as he believes; because there is an absurdity, they think, in supposing a debt to be cancelled before it is contracted. To this objection it may be replied, that there is no more ground for the charge of absurdity in this case than in that of our Saviour, to whom all the sins of his people, past, present, and to come, were at once imputed, for "the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" † and who consequently made satisfaction for millions of sins which had not yet been committed. There is no difficulty in the pardon, which does not occur in the expiation, of future sins. It should be considered that we are speaking of a Divine transaction; and that, to him whose prerogative it is to justify the ungodly, the future is as the past, as fully known and equally the subject of his purposes and proceedings. When a sinner believes, he obtains an interest in the atonement which was made for all his sins. It is not conceivable, therefore, that only a part of his sins should be pardoned; the blood of Christ, which secures him against condemnation for those which are past and pre-

* Matth. xii. 31. Acts xiii. 39.

† Is. liii. 6.

sent, must secure him, at the same time, with respect to those which are future. This is all that is meant by the pardon of these sins. He is placed in such a situation, that they shall not be imputed to him. He is delivered from the curse, or the sentence pronounced upon the transgressors of the law, so that, although he may afterwards transgress, the sentence shall not pass upon him. He may daily offend, for there is no man that "liveth and sinneth not;" but whatever his own apprehensions may be, God is at peace with him: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." *

Hence it appears, that the pardon granted in justification is irrevocable. The man whom his sovereign has forgiven for one act of rebellion, may revolt from his allegiance a second time, and again fall under his displeasure. But "the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." We must not imagine that, like an earthly prince, he frequently changes the objects of his love, and that those who are his favourites to-day, may incur his hatred to-morrow. A foundation is laid for the permanent exercise of his mercy and good will towards believers, in the never-failing efficacy of the atonement of his Son. His blood answers every charge, covers every sin, enforces every plea, and itself pleads with irresistible eloquence in behalf of those for whom it was shed. The sins into which the believer may fall through the treachery of his heart and the influence of temptation, are not a reason why his pardon should be revoked. Conscious of demerit, he may dread the consequence, and be alarmed when he thinks of divine justice, which he has offended and cannot appease; but while repentance and humiliation are his duty, his fears of final condemnation are unfounded, because the sin which disquiets him was expiated on the cross, and the justice before which he trembles requires his absolution.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." † Man would have been blessed if he had never sinned, and, continuing to obey his Creator, had enjoyed the happiness which would have flowed from his favour. Since he has fallen, he can now only be blessed when the

* Heb. viii. 12.

† Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

anger of God is averted from him, and he is treated as if he were innocent.

The forgiveness of sins is not the only blessing which is implied in justification. Although a criminal were fully pardoned, yet, if nothing more were done, he would have no title to the privileges and rewards which were promised to obedient subjects. It is necessary that the sinner should not only be delivered from guilt, but should also be accounted righteous, or treated, on some valid ground, as if he had fulfilled the demands of the law.

Some indeed maintain, that justification consists solely in the remission of sins; but it may be easily shewn that this is a mistake. The Scripture describes this privilege as comprehending the imputation of righteousness to us, and as the constituting of us righteous before God, when it speaks of the "blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works."* "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."† The term, to justify, implies something more than the pardon of sin, for it signifies to pronounce a person to be just; and the criminal is not just in the eye of the law, merely because he is pardoned. There is, indeed, now no charge which can be alleged against him as the reason why he should be condemned and punished; but there is a great difference between simple innocence and righteousness. Righteousness supposes that the whole law has been fulfilled; innocence imports only that it has not been transgressed. I may remark by the way, that even innocence is not the effect of pardon, because pardon pre-supposes that the law has been violated, and the only effect of it in respect of a believer, is to place him in the same situation with an innocent person in so far that the penalty will not be executed any more upon the one than upon the other. No man can be pronounced just by him who judges according to truth, unless he be possessed of justice or righteousness. In the case of a sinner, therefore, the imputation of righteousness is pre-supposed as the ground of his justification, which, consequently, implies something more than simple remission. Besides, let it be considered that, although the remission of

* Rom. iv. 6.

† Rom. v. 19.

sins is a blessing of incalculable value, it does not fully answer the design of the substitution of Christ in our room, or the expectations and desires of the sinner. The object of his suretyship and sacrifice was, not only to reconcile us to God, but to restore the happiness which we had forfeited by disobedience; and the sinner who believes, aims at the enjoyment of a complete and everlasting salvation. But the whole effect of pardon is to deliver a criminal from punishment; it does not reinstate him in the favour of his prince. Were nothing more, therefore, included in justification than the pardon of sin, this privilege might be enjoyed, while at the same time the person was destitute of a title to heaven. Perhaps the reason that some theological writers are so eager to confine justification to the remission of sins is, that a right to future felicity being still wanting, room may be left for the introduction of works as the procuring cause of it. But Jesus Christ will not share his glory with those whom he saves, nor does he bestow his blessings by halves. Those who are forgiven, are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, and a righteousness is imparted to them which is the foundation of their claim to it. Were a sinner merely pardoned, he would be acquitted, but not properly justified. The law of God would still have a demand upon him, because, although he did not owe the debt of suffering, he would still owe the debt of obedience. The privilege would be incomplete; his state would be imperfect; and although secured against the danger of being cast into hell, he would be in the utmost uncertainty whether he should ever be admitted to the happiness of heaven.

There are two ways in which a man may become righteous. First, he may become righteous by his personal obedience. "He that doeth righteousness," says John, "is righteous."* In this way, Adam would have been righteous, if he had faithfully exerted in the service of God the moral power with which he was endowed. In this way, those angels are righteous who kept their first estate when many of their fellows apostatized, and who are now confirmed in holiness beyond the possibility of failure. In this way, some imagine that fallen man may become righteous, because, in their opi-

* 1 John iii. 7.

nion, he has not lost his original ability to obey ; or, if it is in some degree impaired, God has lowered his demands to meet our infirmity. Secondly, a man may become righteous by imputation. If he cannot himself fulfil the law, another, taking his place and coming under his obligations, may fulfil it in his name ; and the obedience of this surety may be placed to his account. Jesus Christ, for example, might become the representative of all mankind, or of a portion of mankind, and by obeying the precepts of the law in their stead, might bring in an everlasting righteousness, which should be reckoned to them as the ground of their justification.

The justification of a sinner must be founded, either upon his personal righteousness, or upon the righteousness of Christ. The grand question is, to which of these is he indebted for acceptance with God ?

The Apostle Paul repeatedly declares, “ that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” I have no doubt that his meaning was distinctly apprehended by those whom he addressed ; but the spirit of controversy has endeavoured to involve it in obscurity, and even to put a sense upon his words directly contrary to what he certainly intended. It has been asked, of what law does he speak ? and what are the works which he excludes from justification ? By the law, some understand the ceremonial law ; and their design in so limiting it is to prove that, notwithstanding the express exclusion of works, we may be justified, in part at least, by our obedience to the moral precepts. But to suppose Paul to have used so many arguments as are brought forward in his epistles, to show that we are not justified by the works of the ceremonial law, is to represent him as having spent much time and labour in vain ; for there is no evidence that there were any persons in his days, who imagined that eternal life could be obtained by ceremonial observances alone. It is plain, from several parts of his writings, that, by the law, he meant the ten commandments which were engraven upon two tables of stone ; but, in the more extensive acceptation of the term, it signified the law of Moses, comprehending moral as well as ceremonial precepts, and was the name for the whole system of duties which God had enjoined upon his people by the ministry of that illustrious man. Admitting, then, that

the Apostle refers to the law of Moses, we have an answer ready to the second question, What works are excluded from justification? All works are excluded, without exception; the works of the first and the second table; moral and ceremonial works; every act of man, performed in obedience to a commandment of God. Nothing is more absurd and perverse, than to ask what works are meant to be excluded, when Paul in twenty places has excluded works in general, without once hinting that he intended only those of a particular kind. The subject is perfectly intelligible to those who are willing to understand; and all the difficulties and objections which have been started, arise from aversion to his doctrine.

In proving that a man cannot be justified by the works of the law, we may begin by observing, that the point is determined by this single consideration, that he is a sinner, and that his present conduct, however dutiful, cannot compensate for his past disobedience. He is bound to obey every moment of his life; and consequently, the obedience which he now performs, being due by a prior obligation, cannot, as if it were a free gift or gratuitous service, cancel the debt which he had formerly contracted. There is not a single sentence of Scripture which authorises us to think, that, if a man who has transgressed shall return to his duty, his past offences will be overlooked. Such an idea is contrary to common sense, and to the express sanction of the law. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."* Hence we see, that by works alone justification is impossible. The utmost which the opponents of our doctrine can plead for is, that our justification is in part owing to our works. The fact, that all men are guilty, demonstrates that some expedient must be found to appease our offended Creator, and that we must be indebted to something more efficacious than our repentance and amendment of life for the pardon of our sins. But, passing this difficulty which meets us at the outset, I observe, that the obedience which the law of God demands is so high, that he must be miserably ignorant of the present state of human nature, who imagines that any of the descendants of Adam is able to perform it.

First, The law demands obedience to all its precepts.—

* Ezek. xviii. 20.

“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” It is thus that Paul quotes these words of Moses, “Cursed is he that confirmeth not the words of this law, to do them.”* The chief difference is, that the word “all” is inserted by the Apostle; but the original passage implies universal obedience, as well as the quotation. The law is a declaration of the will of the supreme Lord, and the authority which enacted it, extends alike to all its precepts. Whatever duty is enjoined in the law, there is the same reason for performing it as for performing any other, namely, the command of the Lawgiver. If a single duty is omitted, the law is not fulfilled; and so high is this matter carried, that the Scripture declares, that “he who offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.”† He virtually subverts all the precepts by the violation of one; for, by disowning the Divine authority in this instance, he in fact disowns it in every instance. All the precepts depend upon the will of the Lawgiver; and, if his will is not a sufficient reason for obedience in one case, it cannot be a sufficient reason in another. Our claim, then, to the favour of God will be invalidated by omission, as well as by positive transgression; and it is preposterous to dream of making one duty a compensation for another. The law admits of no lower terms. We must give all or nothing. We may now ask the man who seeks to be justified by works, whether he thinks himself able to comply with this demand? whether he has always performed his duty in its full extent? whether he has never neglected it, or forgotten it, or omitted it through ignorance; for ignorance, let it be remembered, is not an excuse unless it be invincible. If God has published his law, and we through inattention and carelessness are unacquainted with its contents, our ignorance is voluntary, and we shall in vain hope for impunity. Although a man may have done many things, yet, if he have not done every thing, his plea is lost; for, to justify him in such circumstances would be to declare falsely, that he has fulfilled the whole law, while in truth he had fulfilled only a part of it.

Secondly, The law demands obedience absolutely perfect. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

* Gal. iii. 10. Deut. xxvii. 26.

† James ii. 10.

with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." * This is the sum of the law, and the standard of our duty. It requires such love to God as is worthy of him who is infinitely excellent and good; the highest love of which our nature is capable; love not merely sincere, but perfect; love which not only prevails over opposite affections, but extinguishes them, and reigns alone in the heart. It is inconsistent with the perfection of this love, that it should ever lean towards any rival, that it should be suspended for a single moment, that it should abate and languish in its exercise. The law is violated by the slightest remission of its intensity, or by the temporary cessation of its activity in producing the proper fruits and expressions of it. The love to our fellow-men which is required is equally perfect. We must love our neighbour as ourselves; if not with a love exactly of the same degree, yet certainly of equal sincerity; desiring his welfare as we desire our own, and willingly exerting ourselves to promote it. A regard to our own interests is not to be laid aside; but it must be so moderated as not to degenerate into selfishness. Not only hatred and malice are transgressions of the law, but even indifference to our brethren; nay, it is violated not only by indifference, but by a love not sufficiently ardent, and by efforts not sufficiently vigorous for their good. In short, the law demands not only the form, but the spirit of obedience. It demands, in every act of obedience, the full exertion of all the moral power with which we were originally endowed by our Creator. There must be no languid endeavours, no cold and feeble services. No motives must influence our minds but the right ones; no ultimate end must be proposed but the glory of God. Nothing must be wanting in matter or in manner, in external actions or in internal principles; for a deficiency in the measure or degree of our obedience, would prove fatal to our hopes. Enough, I presume, has been said to shew that no man can be justified by the works of the law.

I shall add, however, in the last place, That the law demands an uninterrupted course of obedience to the end of our lives. In the case of Adam, the time of trial was limited

* Matth. xxii. 37—39.

and probably would have soon terminated. But in our case, I know of no limitation ; there is no period within the bounds of our mortal existence at which we might claim the reward. Every day calls for new labour ; every year extends the term of our service, and multiplies the probabilities of a failure ; it is only when the shades of evening descend, that man finishes his task and retires to rest. We must not therefore think that we have attained, and are already perfect ; but, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to those which are before, we must press towards the mark, if we would bear away the prize of immortality. This we must do, notwithstanding our natural disposition to grow weary of every exercise which is long continued, and in the face of many discouragements and temptations, calculated to divert our attention from our duty, to seduce our affections, and to create impatience of restraint. Should these causes overcome our resolution ; should we suspend our services for a time ever so short ; should we begin to faint, or even admit a wish to be released from our obligations, we should immediately become criminal in the eye of the law, and forfeit all claim to the expected recompence. He who runs a race will not be crowned, although he run well, unless he reach the goal.

The plan of justification by works appears to be absolutely impracticable. The labour is difficult, and man is weak and inconstant. If we take into the account the strength and waywardness of his passions, his liableness to error, the obstacles which lie in his way, and the numerous causes by which his attention may be diverted from his duty, disgust and weariness may be created, and opposite considerations may obtain a predominant influence upon his mind, we shall be convinced of the probability, or rather the certainty, that he will fail, not in one instance only, but in a thousand. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not in deed, or word, or thought. Besides the invincible difficulties attendant upon this plan of justification, it is in itself comfortless, and a source of continual anxiety to every person who in earnest attempts it. No such thing is possible as the assurance of hope ; his mind is a stranger to the peace and joy which arise from the belief of the record of the Gospel, because a fear must always haunt him, that, after all his pains, he shall in some

unpropitious hour lose his labour. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it."* The spirit, therefore, by which he is necessarily animated, is a spirit of bondage, which from its nature destroys the value of his obedience by converting it into the task of a slave, who toils under the dread of the lash.

In an inquiry, whether it is possible to be justified by works, it was necessary to ascertain what are the requisitions of the law. The law is the standard of works; and if they are not conformable to it, the hopes founded upon them are vain. The question is not, What measure of obedience we are disposed to yield, or what measure we are capable of yielding? but, What is the obedience which God requires from us? This we learn from his precepts, fairly and honestly interpreted; and so high is the demand, that every man may justly despair of being able to fulfil it.

But will God be satisfied with nothing less than perfect obedience? Yes, some reply; he has had compassion upon his frail and erring creatures, and is willing to receive them into favour upon easier terms. He has given them a milder law, more suitable to their present condition, which, through the assistance of his grace, they are enabled to obey. This notion, which is exceedingly prevalent, and by which the Scriptural doctrine of justification is subverted, will be examined in the next Lecture.

* Ezek. xxxiii. 13.

LECTURE LXX.

JUSTIFICATION.

GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION CONTINUED ; NOT REPENTANCE AND SINCERE OBEDIENCE.—RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST, THE SOLE GROUND.—OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS TO BELIEVERS.

IN the preceeding Lecture, I shewed you that justification is a legal term, and denotes the sentence pronounced by a judge upon a person who has been brought before him for judgment. If the person is righteous in himself, the sentence merely ascertains and declares in a judicial manner what he is ; but in the case of men who are standing before the tribunal of God, a different process is necessary. As they are unquestionably guilty, an act of grace must be passed in their favour cancelling the obligation to punishment ; and, accordingly, the remission of sins is an essential part of our justification. But this is not all. The acquitted criminal is not necessarily restored to the favour of his prince, and entitled to the reward which was promised to an obedient subject. Pardon frees the sinner from the pains of hell, but gives him no right to the happiness of heaven. He must somehow be possessed of a complete righteousness, which shall answer all the demands of the law, that he may be accepted by his Maker, and obtain the eternal inheritance.

It may be proper by the way to remark, that our common language on this subject may give rise to misapprehension. We often speak of the pardon of sin, and the possession of a

justifying righteousness, as if they were distinct ; and hence it may be supposed, that the one might be enjoyed without the other. This is the inference suggested, when it is sometimes inaccurately stated, that justification consists in the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. But the truth is, that the imputation of righteousness is the foundation of pardon, as well as of restoration to the favour of God. The righteousness of Christ, although it is strictly one and cannot be divided, is distinguished, for the sake of explanation, into active and passive ; the former denoting his obedience to the precepts, and the latter his endurance of the penalty. There is an imputation of his whole righteousness to the believer, and, in the language of Scholastic Theology, it is the material cause of our justification. These remarks have led me to anticipate a subsequent department of the doctrine ; but I deemed it necessary to make them at this time, to guard against any misapprehension of what I have said, that more than pardon is necessary to the sinner, and that he must be possessed of a complete righteousness, a righteousness corresponding to the precept as well as to the penalty, in order to his being accepted by his Maker.

It is therefore an important question, how this righteousness may be obtained ; and there are only two ways in which it can be conceived to be acquired ; by our personal obedience, or by the imputation of the righteousness of another. I have endeavoured to prove, that the attainment of it in the first way is impossible, by shewing you that the demands of the law are so extensive that no man living can comply with them. It requires obedience to all its precepts, without a single exception ; obedience absolutely perfect, a failure in one act, or in the motive from which it is performed, being sufficient to invalidate the whole ; and obedience continued to the end of life, because no prior term is fixed, and it is after death that the final judgment will take place. To every person who considers the extent of these demands, it will appear as impossible for the descendants of Adam, in their present state of weakness and depravity, to fulfil them, as it is to remove mountains by a word or to ascend to heaven by a wish. The notion of sinless perfection as attainable in this life, which has been broached in modern times, could arise only in minds dis-

ordered by enthusiasm, or blinded by profound ignorance of human nature and the Divine law.

I might therefore proceed to shew you that we are justified by the righteousness of another, did not a new obstacle present itself, which it is necessary to remove out of the way. The pride of the human heart, unwilling to forego its claims to the favour of God, has exerted its ingenuity in devising a method of evading the force of the argument founded on the high demands of the law. It is granted, we are told, that we are unable to fulfil them ; but it is added, that the original terms upon which eternal life was promised are relaxed. God has been graciously pleased, for the sake of Christ, to make a new covenant with us, in which he promises to pardon our sins upon repentance, and since we cannot perform perfect, to accept of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification. This doctrine is laid down in a variety of terms, and with greater or less degrees of plainness ; but I have stated the substance of what is maintained by Divines of a particular class. To give it the more plausibility, it is acknowledged, that still our salvation is of grace, because there is grace displayed in lowering the demands of the law, and grace is communicated to assist us ; although it turns out to be such aid as we may use or not as we please, and as will be of little avail without vigorous exertions of our own. It is also acknowledged, that we are under high obligations to our Saviour, in consequence of whose mediation this new law has been given, and what may be wanting in our obedience is supplied by his merit. The scheme, however, is manifestly an attempt to establish our own righteousness, from a reluctance to submit to the righteousness of God. It is a miserable mixture of the law and the gospel, an illicit association of the righteousness of Christ and that of the sinner, an abortive effort to defend the doctrine of justification by works against the solemn denunciations of Scripture. Upon this scheme I make the following remarks.

First, There is not the slightest vestige of it to be found in the Scriptures. I challenge any man to point out a passage in which it is declared, that Christ merited that we might merit ; that since we cannot be justified by perfect, we shall be justified by imperfect obedience ; or that God has given

an easier law, adapted to the present condition of human nature. These are dogmas of very great importance as they relate to our everlasting concerns, and they would need to be supported by evidence perfectly satisfactory; but when we call for it, we are put off with bold assertions and sophistical arguments. We read of our being constituted righteous, but it is by a righteousness which is not our own, nor of the law, but the righteousness of another, namely Christ. “By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* We read of a new covenant which God has made with men, but it is truly a covenant of grace, for it is a covenant of promise. “I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”† Where do we read of a new covenant of works, in which sincere obedience is the condition, and eternal life is the recompence? It exists only in the writings of some men, who cannot or will not understand the gospel of Christ.

Secondly, The idea of such a new law as has been described, is fraught with absurd and impious consequences. It reflects the greatest dishonour upon the law which was originally given to man. It sets aside its demands, although they were not arbitrary, but were founded on the nature of God and man, and the relations subsisting between them; it pronounces them to be unreasonable in the present circumstances of human nature, and makes the authority of the law give way for the accommodation of the criminal. It is in fact an abrogation of the law, than which a greater dishonour cannot be conceived; for the new law of which we speak is totally different from the original law, no two things being more different than a law which requires perfect, and a law which is fully satisfied with sincere obedience. The supposed change implies a reflection not only upon the law, but upon the Law-giver. When first delivered to man, the law was a representation of the holiness of his Maker, a glass which brightly reflected the infinite purity of his nature; and his language by it was, “Be thou holy, for I am holy.” How can we conceive a change to have taken place in its requisitions, and at

* Rom. v. 19.

† Heb. viii. 10—12.

the same time believe that its Author continues the same? Must we not conclude, that if he demands less holiness from his creatures he is himself less holy? He can bear now certain imperfections which he formerly condemned; he is pleased if we love him in some degree, although we do not love him with all our strength and soul; he is content if we have some portion of good-will to our neighbour, although we do not love him exactly as ourselves. If we really wish to do our duty, it is enough; we shall obtain his approbation should we fail in the performance, and the intention will be accepted for the deed. That strictness which called for "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over," no longer exists; that opposition to sin which rejected an action upon which the slightest stain was found, has given place to a more accommodating temper. In short, we do not recognise in the Author of this milder law, the Being who published the decalogue from Sinai. Besides, the doctrine which we are considering, gives a false and unfavourable view of the mediation of Christ. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."* That it was not the ceremonial law which he meant, or the ceremonial law alone, is evident from his subsequent vindication of the moral precepts from the corruptions of tradition. "Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven."† But notwithstanding this solemn admonition, we must conclude that he did come to destroy the law, if we give credit to those who affirm, that in consequence of his mediation, a lower degree of obedience is accepted. The first law would not be pleased with our obedience unless it were absolutely perfect; the second is satisfied if it is simply sincere. The first therefore has been set aside to make room for the second, as the edict of an absolute prince claiming the whole property of his subjects, would be repealed by the publication of another in which he asserted his right only to the half. Jesus Christ, according to this hypothesis, has made that which was once duty to be no longer duty, and that which was once sin to be no longer sin. What is this in the opinion of every man, who believes that

* Matth. v. 17.

† Ib. 19.

the law of God, being founded in the nature of things, is immutable, but to represent Jesus Christ as the minister of unrighteousness? We may conclude from these reflections, that the doctrine of a new law, which accepts of sincere obedience as the ground of our justification, is a vain and unhallowed attempt to build again what the gospel had destroyed.

In the last place, The sincere obedience of believers is expressly excluded from being the ground of their justification. If all works are rejected, sincere but imperfect works must share the common fate; for we are not at liberty to make a distinction in their favour. When the Apostle Paul rejects the works of the law without limitation, he certainly rejects sincere obedience, which consists in works of the law, or it would not be obedience at all. This argument is decisive till it be proved that there are two laws, the one requiring perfect, and the other imperfect obedience, and that only the works of the former are discarded. But the truth is, that the works, concerning which the Scripture affirms that a man cannot be justified by them, are the very works for which some men so strenuously contend. It is a palpable absurdity to suppose that they are perfect works, for these are the works which were originally required, and they would now undoubtedly be as acceptable to God and beneficial to the performer as ever. Unless we conceive them to be such works as man may be supposed able to perform, all the elaborate reasoning on the subject is a mere waste of time and labour. Now, no man expects to be justified by perfect obedience to the law, for no man in his senses imagines himself to be capable of such obedience. It is what is called sincere obedience, which Paul had in view in the declaration so often repeated, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Such was the obedience in which the Galatians trusted. Imperfectly as they understood the dispensation of grace, they were not so ignorant as to dream that they could fulfil the high demands of the law: and they must have rested their hope upon such works as were understood to be within the compass of their ability, upon their honest and persevering endeavours to do their duty. What were the works which Paul renounced, when, in reference to his present as well as his past attainments, he said, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things

but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith ?" * And what were the works to which he referred when he said, " For I know nothing by myself ; yet am I not hereby justified ?" † They were manifestly all his works without exception, and consequently works performed in faith and love, works performed with the assistance of grace ; or in other words, that sincere obedience which some men would obtrude upon us as our justifying righteousness, but in which he was so far from confiding, that he utterly disclaimed it, and earnestly desired to be found in the righteousness of Christ.

We see, then, that the notion of a new law, which requires only sincere obedience as the ground of our acceptance with God, is utterly untenable. It would have been long since exploded, if the Scriptures had been understood, and admitted as the supreme judge of religious controversies ; and its prevalence is owing to the ignorance of those who teach, and those who receive it, and to the strong disposition, which only almighty grace can subdue, to arrogate to ourselves the glory of our salvation.

I shall subjoin two or three general remarks in corroboration of the preceding reasoning, before I leave this part of the subject.

First, If men are justified by works, no adequate reason can be assigned for the mission of Christ. It is acknowledged that we are indebted to him for paving the way for our acceptance with our Maker, and facilitating the attainment of his favour ; but surely some less costly expedient might have been devised to give efficacy to our repentance and our duties, if this was all that was wanted. If man could have fulfilled the demands of the law, Christ would not have been sent to yield obedience to its precepts ; and to suppose it to have been his design to lower its terms, and to render a less degree of holiness sufficient, as the condition of future happiness, is to represent the effect of his mission to have been the virtual subversion of the

* Philip. iii. 8, 9.

† 1 Cor. iv. 4.

moral government of God. Was this the purpose for which he descended to the earth? The doctrine which lessens the necessity of the mediation of Christ, or would lead us to consider it as only supplementary to human exertions, is manifestly contrary to the Scriptures, in which his mediation is represented as the foundation that supports the whole superstructure of the religion of sinners. This argument is employed by Paul—"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."*

In the second place, The doctrine of justification by works, in any form, obscures the glory of the grace of God. This argument also is used by the Apostle—"If it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work."† It is strange that some men should labour, with so much ingenuity and perseverance, to reconcile two things, which are declared to be irreconcilable, and destructive of each other. The glory of grace consists in giving freely, or, as it is expressed in the prophet—"without money and without price;" what is obtained by works, is granted in consideration of previous service, and is the payment of a debt. According to the doctrine of justification by the old or the new law, the question which Paul presumed would put all men to silence, may be answered by thousands: "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?"‡ 'I have given to God,' every justified person might say, 'and I am entitled to the reward which I enjoy.' Few, perhaps, would venture to express themselves in a manner so ill befitting creatures and sinners; but this is the language of the system. How contrary are the sentiments and feelings of which it is a faithful interpreter to the design of God in our redemption, "that he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus!"||

In the last place, Justification by works lays the foundation of boasting. "If Abraham," says Paul, "were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" and although he adds, "but not before God,"§ yet the human heart does not stop at this limit, but proceeds to glory even in his presence. We have an example in the self-righteous Pharisee, who, standing by himself, had the presumption to say, "God, I

* Gal. ii. 21. † Rom. xi. 6. ‡ 1b. 35. || Eph. ii. 7. § Rom. iv. 2.

thank thee that I am not as other men ;” and followed this boast with a catalogue of his good deeds. He who had been justified by works, might say, ‘ My own arm has achieved my salvation.’ He might indeed, with the Pharisee, thank God, acknowledging in words that he was indebted to his assistance for his virtuous actions ; but we know that, when man attempts to divide the honour with his Maker, he always takes the larger share to himself. To suppose that, in delivering us from the misery in which pride had involved us, God would adopt a method calculated to foster that odious principle, is to represent him as having acted with less caution than one would ascribe to a man of ordinary prudence. The design of redemption is to stain the pride of human glory, to bring man to the throne of grace as a humble supplicant, to make him feel and acknowledge that he owes every thing to unmerited goodness. “ Where is boasting then ? It is excluded. By what law ? of works ? Nay ; but by the law of faith.”* As it is evident from these words, that the law of works encourages boasting, it follows, that we are not justified by that law in any form, and that the ground of our justification is neither our perfect nor our imperfect obedience.

Having proved that our own works have no place in our justification before God, we have prepared the way for shewing that we owe this important privilege to the righteousness of Christ. This is the doctrine of our church ; and that it is agreeable to Scripture, we can demonstrate by a multiplicity of proofs. In the Old Testament, the name under which the Messiah was foretold is, “ the Lord our Righteousness.” It was predicted by Daniel, that he was “ to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” And in another prophet, we find these words, “ Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” “ In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” Once more, Isaiah says, “ By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many ; for he shall bear their iniquities ;”† plainly intimating that, in consequence of his atonement for their sins, they should be pardoned and restored to the Divine favour, through faith founded on the

* Rom. iii. 27. † Jer. xxiii. 6. Dan. ix. 24. Isa. xlv. 24, 25. Isa. liii. 11.

revelation of him in the Gospel. In the New Testament, the doctrine is delivered with still greater clearness. It is there declared, that "he was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;" that "he is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" that, in the Gospel, "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith;" that, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" that, "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" that, "by the righteousness of one, the free gift comes upon all men unto justification of life;" that "we are forgiven for his sake;" and that "we are accepted in the Beloved."* The same doctrine is taught by Paul, in the words formerly quoted, when he expresses his earnest desire "to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, which was of the law; but that which is by the faith of Christ;" and in all the passages which affirm that "we are not justified by works, but by faith;" for the object of that faith is Christ, as having obeyed and suffered in our room.

What the righteousness of Christ is, I explained in my lectures on the Covenant of Grace,† of which it was shown to be the condition. Our own righteousness signifies our conformity to the law of God, and the word has the same meaning when used in reference to him. He was made under the law which we had violated, and by which we were condemned, that as our Surety he might fulfil its demands. From us it required perfect obedience to its precepts, for this was its enactment, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;"‡ and such obedience he yielded from the commencement to the close of his life. No man could convict him of sin, and the all-seeing eye of his Father beheld him with unqualified approbation: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Although he owed obedience to the moral law for himself as a man, because his human nature, being a creature, was necessarily subject to the authority of God, yet he did not owe obedience to it in the form of a covenant prescribing it as the condition of life, and in the

* 2 Cor. v. 21. Rom. x. 4. i. 17. iv. 5. v. 18, 19. Eph. iv. 32. i. 6.

† Vol. 11. Lecture 49.

‡ Matth. xix. 17.

circumstances of humiliation and affliction in which it was performed. Besides, we might say, that on the same ground on which the obedience of Adam, although he owed it for himself, would have been available to procure eternal happiness to his posterity, the obedience of Christ was available to obtain a right to the promised reward to all whom he represented. We must, indeed, ascribe a far greater value to it than to the obedience of Adam, when we recollect that the merit of an action increases in proportion to the dignity of the person who performs it, and that he who obeyed in our room was not only a holy man, but the Son of the living God.

But the consideration which more satisfactorily shows, how the obedience of Christ could be imputed to men is this, that it was strictly gratuitous. Having become a creature, he was necessarily subject to the law, which binds all the inhabitants of heaven and earth ; but then it should be remembered that his becoming a creature was a matter of choice. We come into being and are placed under the law without our consent ; but Jesus Christ existed before his incarnation, and assumed our nature by his own spontaneous act. " Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will." * Such language no other person could have used, because it implies a liberty to act or not to act, which no mere man possesses. He placed himself under the law ; but although the law had henceforth a right to demand his obedience, yet its claim was founded solely on his own voluntary deed. If he had not consented, it could not have reckoned him among its subjects. He was made under the law by being made of a woman ; but we know, that while we are passively partakers of flesh and blood, he actively took part of the same. His obedience was, therefore, a free-will offering. It was an offering which he might have withheld, by declining to come into those circumstances in which only obedience could be expected from him. As he did not owe it by any prior obligation, you perceive that it possessed positive merit, and that, as it was not at all necessary for himself, it could be imputed to others, or so reckoned to them, that they should be rewarded for it. But the law required something more than obedience from him. Those for whom he acted were sinners, and it was necessary

* Ps. xl. 7, 8.

that he should expiate their guilt by enduring the penalty, because, till this were done, the demands of the law would not be satisfied, and consequently its righteousness would not be fulfilled. He therefore submitted to be born in a humble condition, to lead a life of poverty and sorrow, and to close his course by a painful, ignominious, and accursed death. As death was the penalty demanded by the law, our redemption is ascribed to his sufferings on the cross. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." * "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." † Thus the law obtained from him all that it demanded from us. Its precepts were obeyed, and its penalty was executed. The obedience and sufferings of Christ constitute his righteousness. By both he satisfied the claims of the law, and there remained nothing to be exacted from him, or from those to whom he stood in the relation of a Surety.

As our Lord fulfilled this righteousness not for himself but for sinners, we perceive upon what ground it is imputed or reckoned to them, so that they are justified on account of it. The reckoning of it to them is the application of it to its proper purpose, the accomplishment of the design which he had in view in obeying and suffering. It is not in every case warrantable to illustrate the Divine procedure by human transactions: "God's ways are often not as our ways, neither are his thoughts as our thoughts." Yet, when we are thinking of his moral attributes, we must conceive of them as analogous to the corresponding qualities in ourselves, free, however, from the limitations and imperfections with which all our virtues are attended. Justice in him must resemble justice in us, although its proceedings may sometimes be above our comprehension, as it is exercised under the direction of an infinite understanding. Now, it is acknowledged to be consistent with justice, that one man should, in certain circumstances, sustain the person of another, act in his name, and procure benefits to him by his services. We cannot, therefore, charge God with injustice for doing what is frequently done by ourselves, is sanctioned by our laws, and is admitted by all men to be perfectly fair and right. Nothing is more common than suretiship; and the actions of

* 1 Pet. ii. 24.

† Rev. v. 9.

the surety are reckoned to the person for whom he is bound, as if they had been performed by the person himself. If, then, one man may pay a debt for another, and be punished for another, as happens in the forfeiture of bail or security for the appearance of a person in a civil or criminal process, and may perform a service of which another is to reap the advantage, on what ground can an objection be raised against the interposition of our Saviour to satisfy the demands of the law, which we were unable to answer? If the Supreme Law-giver, who alone knows what is fit to be done, what is suitable to his character and the relation in which he stands to his creatures, what will most effectually secure the honour and authority of his government; if he shall be pleased to accept the obedience and death of his own Son, invested with the character of our Surety, instead of our obedience and death, who will presume to arraign this dispensation? And how does substitution, with which no person finds fault in human affairs, become unjust as soon as it is adopted in the Divine administration? It is acknowledged that the sin of Adam is imputed to us; for, whatever wrangling there may be with respect to the extent in which we are affected by it, there are stubborn facts, besides the testimony of Scripture, which will not permit us to deny that it has had some influence upon us, as our moral and physical weakness, our diseases and mortality. And who will have the audacity to say that this imputation is unjust? It is surely, then, equally agreeable to justice, that the righteousness of Christ should be imputed to us for our deliverance from the guilt, and all the fatal consequences of the sin of the first man; that, as death came by the one, so life should come by the other.

The imputation of righteousness to a sinner, is the act of God as a judge: "It is God that justifieth." "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works." * The sinner who appears before his tribunal might be condemned, since he is destitute of the righteousness which the law requires; but by an act of grace, God gives him this righteousness which answers its demands, and on this ground pronounces him to be just. It was by his appointment that the Surety fulfilled this righteousness for him; and it is by his

* Rom. viii. 33. iv. 6, 8.

judicial act that it is so reckoned to him, that he enjoys the full pardon of his sins, and a right to eternal life.

The imputation of the righteousness of Christ is founded in union to him. It is the consequence of the legal relation which was established between him and his people in the covenant of grace, by which he was constituted their Surety, and his acts in this character were made referrible to them. His righteousness thus became imputable to them; and it is actually imputed when a real union is formed between them by the Spirit, and by faith. They thus acquire an interest in every thing which belongs to him as their Surety, as a woman acquires a right to the privileges and property of her husband by marriage. It is with a view to this union, which was formerly explained, that we are said to be blessed in him with all spiritual blessings.*

The Hebrew word *צדק* and the Greek word *λογίζομαι*, sometimes signify the reckoning to a person of what really is his own. Thus, Shimei prayed that David would not "impute iniquity" to him;† that is, would not lay the sin which he had committed to his charge, and punish him for it. In like manner, it is said concerning a summary act of justice, which Phinehas had performed, that "it was counted unto him for righteousness."‡ The meaning plainly is, that it was esteemed a righteous act, for which he was commended, and rewarded with "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." But the word also signifies to reckon something to a person which he has not done, as if he had done it. Thus, Paul says to Philemon concerning Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought,"—*τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλογεί*—"put that on mine account;" || impute it to me; hold me responsible for it, as if it were my own deed. It is in this sense that the word is used in reference to the justification of a sinner.

It is certain, from the passages formerly quoted, that the righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of the believing sinner, so that he is pardoned and accepted. Now, it is evident, that it is only by imputation that his righteousness can become ours. No such thing is possible, as the transference of moral qualities from one person to another, or the communication of holiness from one who is pure to one who

* Eph. i. 3. † 2 Sam. xix. 19. ‡ Ps. cvi. 31. || Philem. 12.

is impure. We cannot be made honest by the honesty of another, or benevolent by the benevolence of another, or patient by the patience of another. These are personal qualities ; and unless they be formed in our own minds, unless they have their root and growth there, we must remain dishonest, selfish, and fretful. The virtues which an individual possesses can have no influence upon those around him except by the force of example. But we may be freed from a debt by the payment of a surety, and entitled to a reward for the meritorious services which a friend has performed for us ; and when a discharge is granted in the one case, and a recompense is bestowed in the other, it may be said that the deed of the surety, or of the friend, is imputed to us. The acts are theirs ; but as they were performed on our account, we enjoy the benefits of them.

From these remarks, you will perceive how Jesus Christ is “made of God unto us righteousness.”* It is not by the transference of his holiness into our souls, for we have already shewn that justification does not change our nature, but our state ; but by such an assignation of his merit to us as avails to procure the pardon of our sins, and our restoration to the favour of God. In speaking upon this subject, it is common to say that his righteousness is reckoned to us as if it were our own ; that it is as truly accounted ours as if we ourselves had performed it ; that we are as righteous as if we had fulfilled the whole law. These are popular expressions, which require to be properly explained, or there is a danger that we shall be led into error. They are apt to suggest the idea of an actual transference of the righteousness of Christ to believers, in consequence of which it becomes literally theirs, as the garment of one man becomes, by his gift, the property of another. They may suggest the idea that his righteousness passes from himself to the sinner ; and hence the inference seems to be, that he has parted with it, as a man does not retain what he has given away. But a little attention will convince us that this is not an accurate notion of imputation ; and the reflection, that we are speaking of a spiritual transaction, will be a preservative from gross and material conceptions. The righteousness of Christ must ever be inherent in

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

himself, and it can be imparted to others only in a legal sense. Imputation is the act of God, whose judgment is according to truth ; and who cannot, therefore, account those to be personally righteous whom he knows to be personally guilty. But he may treat them as if they were righteous, in consideration of the righteousness of another. He may pardon their sins, and receive them into favour, and give them a title to eternal life ; and in these things justification consists. This is all that can be distinctly understood to be implied in imputation ; if you patiently and attentively meditate on the subject, you will find that this is the only sense in which the righteousness of the Redeemer becomes ours. It is ours, because, on account of it, God deals with us as if we were righteous in ourselves ; but he cannot look upon us as really righteous, because the contrary is true, any more than we can look upon a person as really meritorious, who is rewarded for the merit of another. When a surety pays a debt, the debtor is discharged, but he is not rendered personally solvent. The sole effect of the deed of his surety is to place him in the same situation, in respect of his creditor, in which he would have stood if he had been able with his own property to fulfil his obligations. Considered in himself, and in the eyes of all around him, he is a bankrupt. To be really righteous, and to be righteous by imputation, or, in the language of our Church, to be accepted as righteous, are, I presume, two things exceedingly different. Jesus Christ himself is truly, and in the strictest sense, righteous ; but those who believe in him are only accounted righteous.

I believe, indeed, that this distinction has not been always attended to ; and that, by many, something more is understood to be implied in imputation, although they are unable to give a satisfactory explanation of their meaning. An idea seems to be entertained, that the righteousness of Christ is so attached to the persons of believers, that it is as truly their own property as is a man's personal righteousness. Justification is a legal act, and must be conceived as analogous to other legal acts of a similar nature. But there is no imputation in law of the deed of one man to another, except in the sense already explained. Having been performed for him, it is so accounted to him, that he enjoys all the advantages

which would have accrued to him if it had been performed by himself. The law never supposes that he actually performed it, but it accepts the performance by another as equivalent to his own. Now, apply these things to the subject before us, and you will perceive that the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does not consist in accounting us in any sense righteous in ourselves, but in treating us, for his sake, as if we were righteous. What he did and suffered, he did and suffered for his people ; and when they claim an interest by faith in his vicarious acts, they are dealt with, from respect to those acts, as if they had themselves obeyed the precepts and satisfied the penalty. In this sense they are righteous, that their Surety has fulfilled all the demands of the law, and left nothing to be demanded from them. It has received from him every thing which it might have exacted from them.

I have endeavoured to prove, that the meritorious cause of our justification before God is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. Works are excluded in every form. No qualification is sought for or regarded in the sinner ; God looks upon him as utterly unworthy in himself, and shews favour to him solely for the sake of Christ, in whom he believes. Thus his design is accomplished, that “ no flesh should glory in his presence.”* There is not left to the justified person the shadow of a ground on which he might claim any honour to himself, or pretence that he had acted a subordinate part in his salvation, as we shall see more fully in the next lecture, when we consider faith as the appointed means of obtaining this privilege.

The Scripture declares, that we are “ justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.”† It would be granted, it might be said, that we are justified by grace, if God pardoned our sins upon our repentance without an atonement, and accepted our imperfect instead of perfect obedience. But how does grace appear according to the doctrine which has now been delivered ? The blessing is strictly due to us ; the full price has been paid for it ; and, properly, justification should be considered as an act of justice. But to this objection the answer is easy. In one view, God is just when he justifies the ungodly man who believes in

* 1 Cor. i. 29.

† Rom. iii. 24.

Jesus ; for every demand upon him has been satisfied, and, consequently, the privilege could no more be withheld from him, than a discharge can be withheld from a debtor after his surety has made full payment of his debt. But, let it be remembered, that those who are justified possess in themselves no claim to the blessing. They have made no atonement for their sins, and performed no obedience to entitle them to the reward. They did not even provide a surety to do for them what they could not do for themselves ; but God called him to the office. In every view, they are utterly unworthy of his favour ; and hence, although their justification may be an act of justice in respect of the Saviour, it is an act of pure grace in respect of them. They are merely recipients of a privilege, which was obtained for them without their concurrence, and for which they give nothing in exchange. They are freely forgiven and accepted, and are thus laid under eternal obligations. Of this they are deeply sensible ; and, accordingly, say with the Psalmist, “ Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us ; but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.” *

A question has been proposed, which is of no practical use, and has been dictated by idle speculation and vain curiosity, Whether the whole righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer, or only so much of it as will answer all the demands of the law upon him ? If we must answer this question, we may do so by asking another : Whether, when a surety pays the debt of twenty persons at the same time, the whole sum is reckoned to each individual, or only that part of it which corresponds to the sum which he owed to his creditor ? It is possible that this question might be perplexed with a variety of refinements and subtile distinctions ; but it would not be worth while to bestow a moment’s attention upon them. It is of no consequence what sentiments men adopt upon a point of this nature. It is not in such niceties that true wisdom consists. The inquiry will appear exceedingly uninteresting to a sinner who is anxious to learn how he may obtain peace with his offended Creator ; and he will be content to know in general, that, if he believe in Jesus Christ, he shall enjoy the full benefit of his mediation.

* Ps. cxv. 1.

I conclude with two quotations from the Fathers. The first is taken from the writings of Justin Martyr; and in the following words, from his Epistle to Diognetus, the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ is concisely and perspicuously delivered: "God gave his own Son a ransom for us, the holy one for the transgressors, the innocent for the wicked, the righteous for the unrighteous, the incorruptible for the corruptible, the immortal for the mortal. For what else could cover our sins but his righteousness? In whom could we transgressors and ungodly be justified, but only in the Son of God? O sweet exchange! O unsearchable contrivance! that the transgressions of many should be hidden in one righteous person, and the righteousness of one should justify many transgressors!"

I shall add a quotation from Chrysostom on the fifth chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "What mind can represent these things? He made the righteous one a sinner, that he might make the sinners righteous. Rather this is not what he says, but something much greater. He does not say he made him a sinner, but sin; not only him who had not sinned, but who did not know sin, that we might be made, not righteous, but righteousness, and the righteousness of God. For this is the righteousness of God, when we are justified not by works, for in this case it is necessary that there should be no spot in them, but by grace, in the blotting out of all sin. This does not permit us to be lifted up, because God freely gives us all, and teaches us the greatness of the gift; for the former righteousness is that of the law and of works, but this is the righteousness of God." From these passages it appears, that, although the Fathers do not always express themselves with the same accuracy as modern theologians, whom controversial discussion has led to a more careful selection of language, yet, the Scriptural doctrine of justification was understood and taught, long before the days of Luther and Calvin.

LECTURE LXXI.

JUSTIFICATION.

OFFICE OF FAITH IN JUSTIFICATION.—WHETHER IT PRECEDES OR FOLLOWS JUSTIFICATION.—DEFINITION OF IT.—FAITH NOT THE GROUND OR CONDITION OF JUSTIFICATION, BUT THE INSTRUMENT OF PARTAKING OF IT.—THE RELATION OF REPENTANCE AND GOOD WORKS TO JUSTIFICATION.

ALTHOUGH Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law during his abode upon earth, yet those for whom he acted as a surety, are not immediately delivered from the guilt of their sins, and restored to the favour of God. They are born children of wrath as well as others, and they sometimes continue for many years in a state of condemnation. The righteousness of the Redeemer is not of avail to them till it is applied. I proceed to speak of its application, and remark that, while it is revealed and brought near to us in the Gospel, faith is the means by which it is received, or by which we obtain such an interest in it as to be accepted in the sight of God. God “justifieth the ungodly that believeth in Jesus.”

But before I consider the office of faith in justification, it is necessary to attend to the question, whether we are justified before faith or after it; or, “whether the act of God imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, or our receiving it by faith, be first in the order of nature.” The question will probably astonish you; but it has actually engaged the attention of some theologians, and given rise to much discussion and metaphysical argumentation. Those who aim at being

exceedingly accurate and consummately orthodox, maintain, "that justification, as it is the act of God, is, in the order of nature, antecedent to our faith; and, that our faith is antecedent to it, as it is passively received into, and terminated on, our conscience." The last words I do not well understand; but, if they have any meaning it must be, that the assurance of our justification, and the peace of conscience which flows from it, are posterior to faith. But surely, if men would allow themselves to think, they would see that this assurance is not justification, but a fruit or consequence of it. It follows from this theory, that what has been always understood by justification is not that which is spoken of in the Scriptures when we are said to be justified by faith, but a certain state of mind closely connected with it. It is not the sentence of God pronounced upon the sinner, but his knowledge and experience of the sentence. It would seem, then, that we have been all along in an error; and that, while we supposed that we became righteous by faith, and gave credit to the Scriptures, which told us that righteousness would be imputed to us if we believed, the matter is transacted in a different manner. We become righteous without faith; righteousness is imputed to us before we believe.

The principal argument by which this opinion is supported, is, that faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and that the Spirit cannot be given to men while they are under the curse of the law, which is not repealed till they are actually justified. The curse is an impenetrable barrier in the way of all gracious communications. But although this seems to be logical reasoning, there are two reasons why I deem it inconclusive. The first is, that, notwithstanding their subjection to the curse, God did love men, and bestow upon them the unspeakable gift of his Son. I should wish to know what there is peculiar in the gift of the Spirit, which should hinder God from giving him till the curse is removed; or how it comes to pass that, while men were under the guilt of sin, God might send his Son to die for them, but cannot send his Spirit to infuse life into their souls. The second reason is, that no reasoning, however plausible, can support any theory in opposition to Scripture. If the Scripture declares, that we are "justified by faith;" that righteousness is imputed to those

who believe ; and calls the righteousness of Christ, “ the righteousness which is by faith,” plainly signifying that faith is antecedent ; what right has any man to come forward and tell me, that I should beware of being misled by this language, for that this is not the true order of things ? God stands in no need of the counsels of men to direct him how to proceed. He knows what he may do consistently with his own character, and the moral constitution of the universe. If he has said, that he justifies a sinner by faith, what signify all the minute reasonings of puny mortals, which go to prove that this is impossible, because there is a sentence against the sinner which must be reversed before the Spirit is given ? Did God not know of this difficulty ? or, knowing it, did he express himself as if it did not exist ? It were well if, in such matters, the interpreters of Scripture would lay aside their logic, and exercise a humble faith, assenting to what is revealed without obtruding their corrections and twisting every thing into an agreement with their systems. And let us all learn to derive our sentiments in religion, not from the subtleties of scholastic divines and their imitators in modern times, but from the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, whose language, if it should appear to some men not properly guarded, is, however, such as they were directed to use by the Spirit of inspiration.

The opinion which I have endeavoured to expose, is hyper-orthodoxy. As it is contrary to the uniform language of the Scriptures, so it is at variance with the doctrine of our church, which teaches us, that the righteousness of Christ is received by faith ; that “ faith is the instrument of justification ;” * and that, although “ God did, from all eternity, decree to justify the elect ; and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification ; nevertheless, they are not justified, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.” †

Of the faith by which we are justified, such a definition has been sometimes given as entirely overthrows the doctrine which we have laboured to establish. It is represented not only as a living faith which works by love, but as formally comprehending good works. It justifies us not as faith, or a

* Conf. Ch. xi. §. 1, 2.

† Ib. §. 4.

reliance upon Christ, but as operative in the performance of our duty, and is another name for believing obedience. As this definition is inconsistent with the known and established use of the term, so it confounds faith and works, which the Scriptures most carefully distinguish and oppose to each other in justification, and it renders some of their declarations on the subject unmeaning and absurd. If faith signifies believing obedience, they are convertible terms, and the one may therefore be substituted for the other. Let us then make the exchange in the following passage from the Epistle of James, and observe what is the result : “ Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”* Observe how the sentence runs. ‘ Show me thy obedience without thy obedience, and I will shew thee my obedience by my obedience.’ A most wonderful species of demonstration, surely ! and worthy to be proposed with great solemnity by an inspired Apostle ! In other passages, the substitution of obedience for faith, would produce an equally ridiculous effect.

Justifying faith has been defined to be a persuasion that Christ died for us in particular, and that our sins are forgiven. I have already shewn that this view of it is a mistake. Nothing is the object of faith but what is revealed. But there is no revelation in the Scriptures that Christ died for any man in particular, and that his sins are forgiven ; and, therefore, to believe these propositions in the first instance, would be downright presumption. Besides, if this were a just definition of faith, if this persuasion entered into its essence, every man would be an unbeliever who never possessed this persuasion, and the moment he lost it would fall from faith. How many of the people of God would be thus excluded from his favour ! how few would be in a state of grace ! It is not a fair way to evade this difficulty, to say that faith, like all the other graces, is imperfect, and that the exercise of it may be suspended. However imperfect any thing may be, its essence always remains ; and to talk of suspending what is essential to it, is in fact to say that it is annihilated.

I have shewn you, in a former lecture, † that justifying faith is not only an assent to the testimony of God concern-

* James ii. 18.

† Lect. lxviii.

ing his Son, but the reliance of the soul upon his atonement and righteousness as the only ground of acceptance with God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."* I shall not resume the illustration of this point, but shall proceed to state what is the office of faith in the justification of a sinner. Now, faith may be considered as itself our justifying righteousness; or as the condition of our justification; or as the means, and, as it has been often called, the instrument, by which we become partakers of this blessing.

To suppose that faith itself is our justifying righteousness, would be to contradict the language of Scripture, in which we are often said to be justified by, or through, faith; an expression which merely imports, that it is somehow connected with the enjoyment of the privilege. None, indeed, will maintain that faith is our justifying righteousness, but those who, contrary to the obvious meaning of the word and its constant distinction from works, have first assumed that it is comprehensive of obedience. It may seem to favour this opinion, that it is said of Abraham that he "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."† The expression is remarkable and is not without difficulty. The meaning of it, we are confidently told, is, that his faith was accepted as his justifying righteousness; that, "by mere favour, God valued it as equal to a complete performance of his duties, and rewarded him as if he had been a righteous person."‡ It would be well if those who use this language, would tell us plainly what they mean by faith; whether it is a simple reliance upon the merit of Christ to the exclusion of works, or such a belief in him as is accompanied with works and derives its efficacy from them. If they speak of faith in the latter sense, as their sentiments on other occasions would lead us to think, their doctrine is refuted by the arguments by which it was formerly proved, that we are not justified by sincere obedience to a new law of grace which God is supposed to have given to us. But if they refer to faith alone, and, at the same time, deny that the righteousness of Christ is imputed, they must maintain that this single act is accepted instead of obedience in general, and on the ground of it a sinner is pronounced to be righteous. Is it possible that any man really believes that

* Rom. x. 10.

† Ib. iv. 3.

‡ Dr M'Knight, Note 2. *in loco*.

faith, thus disjoined from all works, is equivalent, in the Divine estimation, to the whole obedience which we originally owed? Whatever some may believe, it is certain that this faith is the act of the sinner. It is his obedience to a law requiring faith, and is therefore a work as much as any other duty. How, then, are we to understand the words of the Apostle, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." * He evidently speaks of faith and works as directly opposed to each other in our justification. According to this opinion, however, they are not opposed, but while all other works are excluded, one work, namely faith, is retained; so that Paul should have said, "To him who omits all works but one, that work is counted for righteousness." But he has said no such thing, and we are certain never intended to say it; for his design was to prove, that all works are excluded without a single exception, and that we are justified by faith, not as constituting our righteousness, but as receiving the righteousness of Christ. No unprejudiced man who had read his writings, ever doubted that this was his design. When we reflect, that he expressly declares that Christ is made righteousness to us, that we are made righteous by his obedience, and that righteousness is imputed to us without works, we cannot suppose for a moment that the true meaning of the passage before us is, that faith itself is our justifying righteousness. Fair criticism requires, that a singular expression should be explained in consistency with the general sentiments of the book in which it occurs. By this rule, we must understand the words, "faith is imputed for righteousness," in consistency with Paul's uniform doctrine, that a sinner is just before God only in the righteousness of Christ, and must admit that here he uses a metonymy by which the efficient is put for the effect, or the instrument for the end accomplished by it. Abraham's faith was imputed for righteousness; that is, he obtained by it a righteousness, on the ground of which God justifies the ungodly. We are sure that this was the fact; and we are sure, therefore, that this is what the Apostle intended to express.

Again, Faith may be considered as the condition of our

* Rom. iv. 5.

justification, as it has been sometimes called ; but whether with propriety, may be doubted. If, by condition, is meant that which is required to the enjoyment of a blessing, that which must precede it in the order of time or of nature, it may be truly said, that faith is the condition of justification, because nothing more is intended than to express, in different words, the uniform doctrine of Scripture that we are justified by faith. But the "condition" of any thing usually signifies that which, being done, gives us a right or title to it, because it possesses either intrinsic or conventional merit. To call faith, in this sense, the condition of our justification, would be worse than inaccurate ; it would introduce human merit to the dishonour of Divine grace, and overthrow the doctrine so clearly taught in the New Testament. The term, condition, should therefore be avoided, because it is calculated to mislead the ignorant by suggesting ideas contrary to the truth of the Gospel.

In the last place, Faith may be considered as the means or instrument of justification. The latter term especially has been frequently employed ; and as both are of human origin, they have no other claim to be preferred but what arises from their fitness to express the office of faith. As a certain influence is ascribed to it in the justification of a sinner, and, at the same time, it is not the meritorious cause nor properly the condition, either of the terms conveys the idea of the part which it acts in this important affair. Those who believe in Christ are said to receive him, and faith is the instrument by which he is received. It is the hand with which we take the gift, which God freely bestows. Whatever term we use, the sole office of faith is to put us in possession of the righteousness of our Redeemer, not in the way of merit, but by a simple acceptance of it as presented and offered to us in the Gospel.

It was the will of God that we should not be immediately justified on the ground of the obedience and death of his Son in our room, but that some act of our minds should precede the application of his merits to us. In a case of suretiship, the three following things are necessary ; first, that the surety be willing to engage ; secondly, that the person to whom the debt or service is owing be willing to accept of him instead of the principal ; and thirdly, that the person for whom he be-

comes bound, consent that he should act for him. God was willing to accept of Christ as the substitute of sinners ; Christ was willing to come under our obligations ; and all that was farther necessary, was, that we should consent to his undertaking them. Our consent, indeed, was not necessary to his entering upon his office, nor was it possible that it could be given, as he assumed it before we existed ; but it was necessary to our participation of the benefits of his suretiship. This consent is given by faith, which is our cordial approbation of his substitution and vicarious righteousness. And the reason of requiring faith will be evident if we reflect, that, without this act of our minds, we could not conceive the effect of his suretiship to be communicated to us ; for, how could a righteousness be imputed to us, or accounted ours, which we did not desire, and which we refused to accept ?

We may observe how well adapted faith is to promote the great design of God in the justification of sinners, the glory of his grace. Between grace and works, there is an irreconcilable opposition, and the admission of the one involves the exclusion of the other. If we are justified by works, we are not justified freely ; and the honour of grace, which gives without money and without price, is impaired. This would have been the effect if any act of ours had been made the condition of our justification, if we had been pardoned on account of our repentance and reformation, and restored to the favour of God on account of our love to him and sincere obedience to his law. But by the appointment of faith, the glory of grace is fully displayed. It cannot be supposed, that a poor man has any merit in taking the alms which are presented to him without his solicitation. It is not his acceptance which gives him a right to enjoy them, but the offer made by his charitable neighbour. It cannot be supposed, that there is any merit in consenting that Christ should perform for us what we could not perform for ourselves ; any merit in relying on his obedience and sufferings, and acknowledging that there is nothing in ourselves which could recommend us to God. This consent to the suretiship of Christ, this dependence on his righteousness, is the essence of justifying faith. The wisdom of God is manifest in this constitution, which takes away from man every ground of boasting, abases his pride, and leads him

to give all the praise to the true Author of salvation. Having saved us by his own arm, he makes it bare, if I may speak so, stretches it out openly, to make all men see that by it alone the mighty work was achieved. To the sinner nothing is left but to receive, with profound humility and gratitude, the precious gift which God most freely bestows. There is an express acknowledgment in the exercise of faith, that there is no goodness in himself for which God should be favourable to him; and he says, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."*

It may be added, that faith is not of ourselves, but "is the gift of God."† As if it were not enough to exclude works of every kind, and to appoint faith to be the means of obtaining an interest in Christ, lest we should boast of faith itself, through our strong natural disposition to set an undue value upon every thing which belongs to us, it is declared to be a gift, to the acquisition of which we contribute nothing, in the communication of which to us we are passive, and in exercising which we do not exert our own strength, but act in consequence of being acted upon by supernatural power. The glory of our salvation is thus appropriated to God without any deduction. It is his province to give all, and ours to receive all.

It remains to inquire whether any place should be assigned to repentance in our justification; and the inquiry is the more necessary, because nothing is more common than to speak of it as if it were the condition upon which the enjoyment of this blessing is suspended. It is supposed that Christ died "to give our sorrows weight," or to render our repentance efficacious; language which imports, that through his mediation repentance is accepted as a sort of satisfaction for our sins, or as a reason why they should be pardoned. All our former reasoning tends to shew that this opinion is erroneous. If all works are excluded from being the ground of our justification, repentance is not to be exempted. In refuting this opinion some make use of this argument, that repentance cannot be the condition of pardon, because the former does not go before but follows the latter; they think, that till a man believe in Christ and consequently be justified, he

* Is. xlv. 24.

† Eph. ii. 8.

cannot truly repent. I shall not enter at present into the controversy respecting the order of these two graces, although it would be easy to shew that those, who place justifying faith first, are encountered by difficulties and objections, which are not sufficiently removed by a hypothesis founded on what they conceive to be the necessary arrangement of the Divine operations in the application of redemption. Some men, while they profess the highest veneration for the standards of our Church, do not always conform to their language, but take the liberty in particular instances to make use of a corrected and, in their judgment, a more accurate phraseology. Let our standards be altered if they are wrong, but let not those, who are most zealous to maintain their integrity and reject any proposal of change, practise, without avowing it, what they openly denounce as a crime. "Although repentance," says our Confession of Faith, "be not to be rested in, as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it."* Not only is it asserted in general, that an impenitent sinner cannot be pardoned, but it is expressly stated that before he is pardoned he must cease to be impenitent. Whatever may be the order of faith and repentance, both must exist in the mind of the sinner who is justified; and indeed it is impossible to conceive any man to believe in Christ, without being duly affected with a sense of sin, of its vileness as well as of its guilt. He who is pardoned is a penitent like the publican in the parable, who said, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" he is not pardoned, however, for his repentance, but, as our Confession affirms, by an "act of God's free grace in Christ." God has no respect to his penitence as the cause for which he receives him into favour, but solely to the atonement and obedience of his Surety.

It may be objected, that, although the Scriptures do in many places speak as if we were justified by faith alone, yet there are other passages which appear to favour the doctrine of justification by works. It is said for example, that men shall be finally judged "according to their works;"† and our Lord represents the general judgment as proceeding upon

* Conf. ch. xv. §. 3.

† Rev. xx. 12.

this ground, when to the sentence pronounced upon the righteous he subjoins an enumeration of their deeds of charity as the reason of it: "For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink," * &c. But, besides that one part of Scripture should be explained consistently with another, and particular occasional expressions should be understood according to the general tenor of its doctrine, the apparent difficulty will vanish if we reflect upon the design of the judgment. Had nothing been intended except the distribution of rewards and punishments, this might have been accomplished without the publicity and solemnity of the grand assize; but the purpose of an assembly of the human race, of their arrangement in two divisions, and of the other proceedings of the great day, is to reveal the righteousness of God. It is to convince all, that the Judge of all the earth does right, by an open display of his justice. For this end, it is necessary that the works of the righteous should be brought forward to view, as well as those of the wicked; for something would be wanting to complete the transaction, if the sentence in the case of the latter were proved to be just by a detail of their crimes, but in the case of the former were founded only on their faith. The foundation, indeed, would be valid; but as faith is an act of the mind, although known to God it is unknown to all other beings, unless it be made manifest by its fruits. Now, as the object of the judgment is not merely to exercise justice, but to convince all the spectators of the awful scene that it is exercised, it is necessary that some sensible proof should be produced, which shall leave no doubt in their minds that those on the right hand were entitled to the happiness to which they are adjudged. Their good works will constitute this proof, not as being the ground of their title, but as the evidence that they are possessed of that faith to which eternal life was promised, because it was the appointed means of uniting them to the Saviour. This is the true reason why their works will be referred to in the judgment; and in this way we must account for the fact, if we would not set one part of Scripture at variance with another. Men will be judged according to their works; or a

* Matth. xxv. 35.

sentence will be passed upon them according to their state and character, of which their works will be the evidence.

There is another passage in which good works may seem to be represented as the foundation of our title to heaven. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, *that—iva*—they may have *right—εξουσια*—to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." * *Εξουσια*, which is rendered *right*, is a word which bears a variety of senses, and may be translated *power, authority, liberty, privilege*. It does not necessarily convey the idea of right, in the common acceptation of the term ; it may be understood simply to mean, that those who do the commandments shall have access to the tree of life, or shall enjoy the privilege of access to it. The meanings of the conjunction *iva*, translated *that*, are also numerous. It denotes the final cause, or that for which any thing is done, or merely the event and issue of a thing, or it is used for the simple purpose of explanation : "Blessed are they that do his commandments." How does this appear ? "They shall have access to the tree of life." Blessed are they who obey in the hope of eternal life, for eternal life shall be their gracious reward. This shall be the happy result. In the preceding context, our Lord declares, "that he will come quickly, and that his reward is with him, to give every man according as his work shall be." † Then follows the illustration. The righteous shall be admitted into the celestial city and partake of all its delights ; but the wicked shall be excluded from it, "dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." ‡ When the passage is thus explained, there is no difficulty in it. It merely states the happiness of those who obey in the hope of eternal life, the great motive proposed in the gospel to excite and encourage us, for their labour shall not be in vain. It points out the character of the persons for whom future felicity is reserved.

The principal difficulty arises from the Epistle of James, who seems to teach a different doctrine from that of Paul, when he says, "Ye see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." || But that the contradiction is real, we cannot admit without supposing that one of them was a

* Rev. xxii. 14.

† Ib. 12.

‡ Ib. 15.

|| James ii. 24.

false teacher ; and we must therefore use our endeavours to reconcile them, as we are certain that the Spirit of God, by whom both were inspired, could not deliver contradictory oracles. Some pretend that Paul is an obscure writer, and that on this account we should give the preference to James. We know the cause of the complaints against the style and reasoning of the former. His doctrine is peculiarly offensive to self-righteous men ; and they are eager to invalidate the authority of a teacher, who tells many plain and mortifying truths concerning the depravity of human nature, the insufficiency of our works, and the absolute necessity of an entire dependence upon the righteousness of Christ.

In order to shew that the difference between the two Apostles is only apparent, and that their writings perfectly harmonize, I request your attention to the following remarks.

First, Paul and James had not the same design in view. From the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians, it appears to have been his design to shew, that a sinner is pardoned, and accepted, and entitled to heaven, not on account of his works, but through faith in the blood of Christ and the imputation of his righteousness. And the reason why he insisted so much upon this doctrine, was, that it is a fundamental article of the Christian religion, and was strenuously opposed by certain teachers, who affirmed that men are saved by the righteousness of the law. James had a different object in view. He does not enter upon the consideration of the plan, by which a sinner is justified before God, but sets himself to oppose the improper use which had been made of the doctrine of salvation by grace. It appears that some, misunderstanding what was said concerning faith, had imagined that we are justified by a bare assent to the gospel, or that faith consisted in an orthodox belief. To the carnally minded this was a very acceptable notion, as it followed, that they might hope for eternal life although they continued in sin. Thus they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. In opposition to a system which was subversive of all religion, the Apostle maintains that good works are required from every disciple of Christ ; and that nothing was more vain than for men to pretend that they were justified, while their faith was manifestly of such a nature as to leave them in a state of

alienation from God. In a word, his design is not to inform a man how he shall obtain the favour of God, but to convince him, that if his faith is barren and dead he is in a state of condemnation, notwithstanding his profession and his hopes.

I remark, in the second place, That Paul and James do not speak of the same faith. Hence, although they ascribe different things to faith, although by the one it is represented as alone the instrument of our justification, and by the other as ineffectual without works, there is no contradiction in their writings, because they do not refer to the same subject. The faith which, according to Paul, is the instrument of our justification, is a fruit of the Spirit, the faith which is elsewhere termed "the faith of God's elect," "precious faith,"* wrought in us by the power which raised Jesus Christ from the grave, a living and active principle which purifies the heart and excites to universal obedience. But to the faith of which James speaks, these characters and exercises cannot be ascribed. The reason, indeed, why he affirms that men cannot be saved by it, is that these properties do not belong to it. It is a dead faith, a body without the soul, a faith which is exhausted in an empty profession, and which he therefore compares to the inefficient charity, which entertains the hungry and naked with compassionate words, but neither feeds nor clothes them. Such being the marked and essential difference between these two kinds of faith, there is no inconsistency in ascribing justification to the one, and denying it to the other. "If one," says an eminent divine, "affirms that fire will burn, and another denies it, there is no contradiction between them, whilst one intends real fire, and the other only that which is painted."

The last remark which I shall make, is still more conclusive, namely, that Paul and James do not speak of the same justification. Paul, as we have seen, discusses the important question, How we are justified before God, how we obtain the pardon of our sins, and acceptance? and he assigns these privileges "to grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."† The inquiry of James relates to the kind of *faith* by which we are justified, and to the way in which it is evinced to be genuine. It does not treat

* Tit. i. 1. 2 Pet. i. 2.

† Rom. v. 21.

of justification before God, but of justification before men. He asks, How other men shall know that we are justified? and answers, that they will know it by our works. That this is not a gratuitous assumption for the purpose of evading a difficulty, but is the true meaning of justification in the Epistle of James, is evident from the instances to which he appeals. The first is Abraham; concerning whom he says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God." * It deserves attention, that, while Abraham is said to have been justified by works, the Scripture is represented as fulfilled which affirms, that faith was imputed unto him for righteousness. These things seem to be contradictory; and they would be so if the Apostle were speaking of his justification before God, because it would be attributed to two opposite causes, to works and to faith. But, if we consider him as referring to the justification of Abraham before men, the apparent contradiction will be removed, and this will be the meaning of the passage: "When Abraham believed in God, righteousness was imputed to him, and he was justified. This, however, was a secret transaction, known only to God and to his own conscience. But when he offered Isaac upon the altar, it was manifested to others; for this high act of obedience demonstrated that he was possessed of the living faith, to which the promise of salvation is made." To confirm this interpretation of the passage, let it be observed, that this justification of Abraham is said to have taken place at the time when he obeyed the command of God, to offer up in sacrifice his only-begotten son. Yet the Scripture declares that, thirty years before, as we learn from the fifteenth chapter of Genesis, he was justified by faith. But men are not twice justified by faith; and the inference is therefore unavoidable, that this second justification must relate to a different transaction,—his justification before men, the manifestation of the sincerity of his faith, and, consequently, of his acceptance

* James ii. 21, 22.

with God ; for faith can be shewn only by our works. And thus you perceive in what sense his faith was made perfect by works. They did not supply any defect in it, and concur with it to recommend him to the favour of God ; but they proved it to be perfect, or to be not a speculative opinion or listless assent, but a full and practical persuasion of the truth. The second instance which he produces, is Rahab : “ Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way ? ” * In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are informed that she received them by faith. † How she came to the knowledge of Jehovah, the sacred historian has not told us ; but it is certain that she did believe in him, and, because she believed in him, received the Israelitish spies into her house. She was therefore justified before their arrival. Hence, her justification by works must signify, as in the case of Abraham, the manifestation of her faith. By them she was justified before men, or proved to be a believer ; but she was justified before God prior to the performance of them.

When we consider that Paul and James had different designs, and that they speak of different kinds of faith and justification, we perceive that notwithstanding an apparent discrepancy the doctrine of the one perfectly harmonizes with that of the other. When James affirms, that “ by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,” ‡ he does not contradict Paul, who asserts, that “ we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law ; ” § he simply lays down this important proposition, that it is not by a simple profession of faith that we can know a man to be in a state of favour with God, but by a profession accompanied with such good works as evince its sincerity. “ Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works : shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” § No person of common understanding, and common candour, would charge two modern Divines with contradicting each other, if to the question, How are we justified before God ? the one should answer, By faith ; and to the question, How are we justified before men, or proved to be genuine believers ? the

* James ii. 25. † Heb. xii. 31. ‡ James ii. 24. § Rom. iii. 28.

§ James ii. 18.

other should answer, By works. It requires little sagacity to perceive, and only a little honesty to acknowledge, that, if Paul and James speak of the same subject, it is utterly impossible to reconcile them. The one or the other must be in an error ; and, consequently, the one or the other must be erased from the list of the Apostles, unless, with Unitarians, we will venture to deny their inspiration, and boldly maintain that they were liable to mistakes like other men. Had Paul and James been understood by the primitive Christians to treat of the same justification, their Epistles would not have been both received as divine. The one or the other would have been rejected. If two writings had appeared, in one of which it was affirmed that there are three persons in the Godhead, and in the other that there is only one person, both could not have been admitted into the canon, but the latter would have been pronounced to be the work of a heretic. Doubts were entertained of the Epistle of James by some individuals, probably because it seemed to be at variance with the doctrines of Paul ; but it was received by the Jewish believers to whom it was addressed, as we learn from its insertion in the Syriac version, made, it is supposed, in the first, or the beginning of the second century ; and it has long been acknowledged by the whole Church as the genuine production of the Apostle whose name it bears.

LECTURE LXXII.

JUSTIFICATION.

REFUTATION OF THE OBJECTION, THAT THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION
BY FAITH IS INJURIOUS TO MORALITY.

AGAINST the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, objections have been advanced, some of which have been already considered. It might have been previously expected, that it would not be quietly received; and that, mortifying as it is to the pride of man, it would call forth many attempts to set it aside, and to secure to him, if not the whole honour, at least some share in the glory of his salvation. Accordingly, no article of faith has given rise to more violent controversies, and been exhibited in a more odious light; endeavours having been used, not only to disprove it by direct argument, but to load it with consequences from which it may appear that it cannot be true. The consequences, indeed, which are deduced from a doctrine, ought not to be always admitted as a test of its truth, for they may be unfairly drawn, and may be false even when to us they seem to be legitimate, because the subject may be obscure, and we may take only a partial view of it; but, if it could be clearly shewn, that a doctrine leads to vice and impiety, the proof would be complete that it did not emanate from the source of all purity, but was an invention of men, or a suggestion of the father of lies.

There is an objection which has been frequently urged against justification by grace, and which Paul, anticipating

from his knowledge of the light in which the doctrine would be viewed by men of corrupt minds, has stated and refuted. The doctrine seems to wear an unfriendly aspect to holiness, for which some men profess great zeal, and would persuade us that they are deeply concerned for its interests. In many cases, the sincerity of this profession may be called in question without a breach of charity; because we find that those who are most eloquent in their declamations in favour of good works, are not distinguished by the practice of them; and that frequently the only proof which they give of attachment to them, consists in violent invectives against those who hold a different creed. At present, however, we shall confine our attention to their reasoning. If we are freely pardoned, they say, and if nothing is required of us that we should enjoy this blessing but to believe, this easy method of obtaining forgiveness will be an incitement to repeat our offences. May we not also be tempted to sin from the notion that, the more numerous our transgressions are, divine grace will be the more glorified in passing them by? If good works are not the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, and he is accepted who does not work, but believes, the most powerful inducement to perform them is taken away. It is the hope of being benefited by his labours, which rouses a person to active exertion. No consideration can be conceived more effectual to excite us to obedience, than the prospect of recommending ourselves to our Maker, and of being rewarded with a blessed immortality; but, if the prize is secured to us by the merit of another, nothing can be expected to follow but total remissness. Men, persuading themselves that they are justified by faith, will naturally conclude that good works are unnecessary, every purpose which they were intended to accomplish being effected by a different expedient. They will think that there is no hazard in neglecting them; and perhaps they will deem it their duty to neglect them, lest they should interfere with the righteousness of Christ, weaken their feelings of dependence upon him, and create in their minds an idea of merit, by which his honour would be impaired.

This is the objection against our doctrine; and it is stated, I apprehend, in all its force. Justification by faith, without

the works of the law, is injurious to the interests of morality, by weakening or destroying the motives to it. If the objection were well founded, if there were such an opposition between free justification and the necessity of holiness as some men pretend, it would follow that our views are erroneous, and that what we call the Gospel of the grace of God is a licentious perversion of the truth. Paul, as we have already remarked, anticipated this objection; and it is not improbable that it was brought forward by some disputers in his days. Hence arises a strong presumption, that his doctrine and ours, in reference to this important article of religion, agree. There would have been no room for the objection, if he had taught that men are in any sense justified by works. Whatever other faults might have been found with his doctrine, it could not have been alleged that it had a tendency to set aside the obligations to duty; and if any person had been so stupid as to urge this objection, Paul would not have entered into an elaborate train of reasoning with a view to shew that it was inapplicable, but would have thought it sufficient to state anew, that, according to him, good works were the condition of our restoration to the favour of God. After having declared that, "as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;"* after having given the same view of justification which we have exhibited, he adds, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed,

* Rom. v. 18, 19.

that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."*

Decisive, however, as this objection is accounted, and triumphantly as it is displayed as a complete refutation of our doctrine, it is easy to shew that it discovers rather the ignorance of those who advance it, than the strength of their cause. Three things are taken for granted, which are grossly and palpably false. It is presumed, that, if good works are not necessary to the justification of a sinner, they are not necessary for any other purpose and are altogether useless; that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man may be received into the favour of God and yet continue unholy; and that the doctrine of justification by grace does not supply motives of sufficient efficacy to insure our obedience. If the reverse of these assumptions can be proved, the objection falls to the ground; and although we be justified by faith, the interests of holiness are effectually secured.

First, It is assumed that, unless good works are the condition of justification, there is no other reason of sufficient efficacy to induce us to perform them. It is not a little strange that this idea should be adopted, especially by persons who have much to tell us concerning eternal and immutable morality, by which they mean, that morality is founded in the nature of things, is independent of time, and place, and circumstances, and is of perpetual obligation, whatever may be the condition of intelligent beings. It does not well accord with their fine declamations concerning the intrinsic beauty of virtue, the satisfaction which it imparts to the mind and which more than compensates the difficulties and sacrifices attending the practice of it, and the disinterested character of a good man, who will cultivate virtue for its own sake. These speculations have vanished into air, and it is confessed by the authors of them that virtue requires a more substantial recommendation than its own charms; that it is in fact a calculation of interest, and that unless it hold out the prospect of solid advantage, it will have no authority upon our consciences, no attractions for our hearts. Hence we learn what are the real sentiments and feelings of the objectors, for they virtually acknowledge, that notwithstanding

* Röm. vi. 1—7.

their pretended zeal for good works, they would not hold them in estimation were it not for their consequences ; that they do not set a value upon them for their intrinsic worth, but solely because they are the means by which their own happiness will be promoted. This is a fair inference from their objection ; for they unquestionably judge from themselves when they say, that, if men are once persuaded that works are not the condition of eternal life, they will consider themselves as loosed from any obligation to perform them. They conclude that other men would act in this manner, because they are conscious that such would be their own conduct.

But although they can perceive no reason for the performance of good works, if they are not the meritorious cause of our justification, those who have studied the Scriptures and imbibed their spirit, entertain a different opinion.

Obedience to the divine law is our indispensable duty, without any reference to our own interest. Nothing is more contrary to reason and piety than to suppose, that moral obligation is founded on a contract between us and our Maker, by which we engage to fulfil certain services in consideration of certain advantages. The idea assumes what is false, that we are independent beings, and voluntarily enter into an engagement to give what we might withhold. If God is the author of our existence and faculties, he has undoubted right to prescribe the purpose for which we should use those faculties, and his will constitutes a permanent obligation. The reason why we should obey is not that we expect a recompense from him, but that being our Creator he is our Sovereign Lord, to whose commands we should implicitly bow. There is no doubt, that a creature would be bound to obey although he knew that next moment he should be annihilated. The truth is, that what we do is not obedience, unless it be done from respect to his will ; for to obey is to execute the orders of a superior because they are his orders, and not because they will be productive of some advantage to ourselves. And this is in fact the consideration by which true Christians are influenced. They think principally of their duty, regarding their interest as a subordinate consideration, and conform to the precepts of the law because the authority which enjoins them is sacred in their eyes. Hence

it appears, that, although good works should not be the condition of justification, the reason for performing them remains in all its force. By them we discharge the debt of obedience which we owe to the Author of our being.

Again, obedience is the return which is due to God for his innumerable favours. The objectors seem to think that the expectation of new blessings is a powerful excitement to duty, but that the remembrance of past blessings will have no such effect. It is acknowledged that men are very apt to forget the kindness of a benefactor; but bad as human nature is, instances of gratitude are not uncommon, and many a willing service is performed under the influence of this feeling. In particular, we might calculate upon its powerful operation in those who have received from God the remission of their sins and a right to eternal life, and whose hearts have been softened and made susceptible of every good impression by the Spirit of grace. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" is the question which a justified man will naturally ask; and knowing that obedience is the most acceptable return, "he will make haste, and not delay to keep his commandments." The objection makes no allowance for the operation of gratitude, and supposes men, even when brought under the power of religion, to be entirely governed by selfishness. But true believers enter into the spirit of the apostolic exhortation, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." *

In the next place, By obedience we glorify God, and commend religion to our fellow-men: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." † While we thus pay to God the homage which he claims, and recognise him as a Being of essential purity, which is the glory of his nature, our conduct is calculated to make an impression upon others, and to induce them seriously to consider their obligations, and to endeavour, through Divine assistance, to fulfil them: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." ‡ These are reasons which will influence those who reflect, that the end of all the works of

* 1 Cor. vi. 20.

† John xv. 8.

‡ Matth. v. 16.

God is his glory, and that as it is passively promoted by the inferior parts of the creation, in which his perfections are displayed, so it is the sacred duty of intelligent beings to contribute to it actively, by the dedication of their faculties to his service. In answering the objection, we are perpetually reminded of the narrow contracted views from which it has proceeded. What is not immediately related to themselves, does not fall under the contemplation of the objectors. Why should they glorify God, unless it can be shewn that some benefit will accrue to them? They who reason in this manner, furnish the clearest evidence that they do not understand the enlightened and liberal principles of genuine piety, and are actuated by the mercenary spirit of slaves. It is certain that the spirit of a Christian would not have dictated the objection which we are at present refuting.

I remark, in the last place, that the consideration which appears to the objectors to be alone of any force to excite men to obedience, a regard to their own interest, is not wanting, according to the doctrine of justification by faith. Although good works are not the foundation of our title to eternal life, yet they are intimately connected with our happiness, and contribute to promote it. To a believer, holiness is an evidence of the existence of Divine grace in his heart, of the sincerity of his faith, and consequently of his interest in the favour of God. "Hereby perceive we that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."* It is his qualification for communion with God, between whom and a creature polluted with sin there can be no comfortable intercourse. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."† If the joys of fellowship with God will not excite men to their duty, the promise of heaven itself as their reward would have as little effect; for heaven, rightly understood, is a continuation of the pleasures of devotion, and cannot be an object of desire unless those pleasures are prized above all earthly delights. And this leads me to state, that when we have abandoned the idea of good works being the condition of future happiness, there remains this strong reason for performing them, that they are indispensably necessary to prepare us for it; for this is the law, from which there is no

* 1 John iii. 19.

† 1b. i. 7.

exemption, that, "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." * He who trusts in the merit of the Saviour, feels himself impelled to the cultivation of holiness as powerfully as if his title to heaven had depended upon it. What would a right to it avail if he were incapable of enjoying it? and what joy would the presence of God give to a man who was not assimilated to him by the renovation of his soul? Sin, which is the source of our inquietudes and sorrows upon earth, would render us miserable even in the region of blessedness.

If, then, there are so many purposes which holiness serves, and which are, consequently, reasons for practising it, we do not set aside good works by excluding them from our justification. We are not so foolish as to think that they are useful for nothing, because they are not useful for every thing. This, however, is the import and the strength of the objection which is advanced against our doctrine with so much confidence. If we are not justified by works, they may be dismissed as superfluous.

In the second place, It is taken for granted by those who urge the objection, that justification and sanctification may be separated, or that a man, who is received into the favour of God, may continue unholy. If it can be shewn that this supposition is false, the objection falls to the ground. In reasoning concerning the Divine dispensations, we ought not to admit arbitrary hypotheses, but should endeavour to ascertain what is the established order of things. Men may conceive through ignorance a sinner to be justified without being sanctified, or his state to be changed while there is no change in his character, and on this ground may prove the dangerous consequences of maintaining the doctrine of justification by grace. Here is a man who is the object of the love of God, but is in an unregenerated state, and possesses a right to a blessed immortality, although he is living in sin. Were this the true state of the case, it might be justly said of our doctrine, that it leads to licentiousness, and must therefore have originated in human ignorance or depravity. But the separation exists only in theory, and affords an instance of the false alarms which men frequently experience from phantoms of their own imagination.

* Heb. xii. 14.

The Scriptures represent the two blessings as closely connected and as enjoyed at the same time : “ Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* When they draw the character of justified persons, the description points, not only to their interest in the Divine favour, but also to the holy exercises in which they are engaged : “ There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit ;” † that is, they are not carnal, but spiritual ; they are not governed by the desires and volitions of corrupt nature, but by the principles of grace. It was not the intention of the Apostle to state the ground on which they are exempt from condemnation, but to inform us of the moral qualities of the persons to whom this privilege belongs. To be under grace, and not under the law, or, in other words, to be delivered from the curse of the law and restored to the favour of God, is represented as a state which secures us from the reigning power of sin : “ Sin shall not have the dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” ‡ The faith by which we are justified is said to be a living faith, which manifests itself in holiness of life, while the faith which is alone, the faith which is not productive of good works as its native fruit, is pronounced to be useless to its possessor : “ As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” ||

The inseparable connection between justification and sanctification, is farther manifest from the consideration, that a sinner cannot be justified till he believe ; and that as faith is a supernatural grace, it cannot exist without the communication of the Spirit to the soul. But the Spirit, if I may be allowed to use figurative language, does not come alone ; he brings all his graces, or as the Scripture calls them, his fruits along with him, infusing not only faith, but also hope and love ; and thus he sows the seeds of holiness, which immediately spring up and yield a rich harvest of good works. Those who maintain that the doctrine of justification by faith is unfriendly to holiness, have adopted unscriptural ideas of faith. They suppose it to be a mere assent of the understanding to a proposition supported by evidence, and do not

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Rom. viii. 1. ‡ 1b. vi. 14. || James ii. 26.

seem to know, that the faith of which we speak, is an act which proceeds from a principle of spiritual life in the heart. The justified person was dead in trespasses and sins, but is now alive ; his nature is changed as well as his state ; he is delivered from the power as well as from the guilt of sin ; and his faith, which embraces the righteousness of Christ, works by love to God and man, as naturally as a tree puts forth buds, and leaves, and blossoms, and fruit. The objection which we are considering betrays deplorable ignorance of the operations of grace ; and those who have derived their ideas of faith, its origin and its efficacy, from the Scriptures, will hardly consider it as worthy of a serious refutation. What method can be conceived more effectual to secure the performance of good works, than the communication of the Spirit of holiness ?

Hence, we perceive how false it is to charge the doctrine of justification by faith, with giving encouragement to the neglect of our duty. According to the immutable law of heaven, he who is justified, is also sanctified ; and he cannot be justified, because he cannot believe, till he receive the Holy Ghost, by whom he is enabled “ to put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”*

In the third place, It is presumed that the doctrine of justification by faith, does not supply any motive of sufficient efficacy to restrain us from sin, and to excite us to obedience. Nothing, however, is more easy than to shew that the idea is unfounded.

First, This doctrine furnishes a most powerful motive to restrain us from sin, by exhibiting it in such a light as is calculated to inspire the utmost abhorrence of it. The pardon of sin is granted in justification ; but it is granted solely on the ground of the atonement of Christ. We are thus reminded that sin is offensive to God in the highest possible degree, since nothing could induce him to forgive it but the dreadful sacrifice of his only-begotten Son. His wrath could not be appeased but by the shedding of his precious blood. Were God to pardon us upon repentance, it would appear, indeed,

* Eph. iv. 22, 24.

that he had been displeased ; but we should naturally conclude, that he was not much offended, since, on so slight a ground as our sorrow, and confession, and amendment, he was willing to cancel what is past. It is not a very aggravated fault for which repentance will atone. But now, when death is demanded, and that the death not of a mere man, but of the Lord of glory, what can we infer but that the Divine detestation of sin is infinite ? And can we believe this awful truth, and at the same time persist in the love and practice of sin ? It is impossible. Men may sin when the scene of the crucifixion is forgotten ; but they will not sin when it is fresh in their remembrance. Upon a regenerated heart its power is irresistible. A believer will not transgress while the terrors of Divine wrath are displayed before his eyes, and a most impressive demonstration is given of the contrariety of sin to the will and nature of God. He is delivered, indeed, from its penal effects ; but he is delivered by such means as must inspire him with abhorrence of its vileness and dread of its consequences.

Secondly, This doctrine supplies a strong motive to obedience, by reminding us that the obligation to it is immutable, and can, upon no account, be dispensed with. Justification by faith proceeds upon the ground of the previous fulfilment of the law by Jesus Christ in the character of our Surety. Although to us the gift of eternal life is free, and nothing is required but that we should accept it with humble gratitude, yet, in respect of our Redeemer, it is the reward of the fulfilment of the condition upon which it was originally promised. The plan of justifying a sinner, according to the Gospel, does not set aside the moral law or abate its demands ; but, on the contrary, it recognizes its authority, and magnifies it by a righteousness commensurate to its requisitions. The dispensation of grace is not intended to throw any reflection upon the dispensation of the law ; but, while it provides a remedy for the evil caused by the violation of the law, it gives a full sanction to its claims, and exhibits the original constitution as worthy of its Author, a bright display of his justice and holiness. From the terms prescribed to our Saviour we learn, that God could not dispense with obedience, even in favour of those whom he loved. How then is it supposed that our

doctrine is unfavourable to holiness? Does it teach us to disregard the precepts of the law, by carrying its authority to the greatest possible height? Does it present a temptation to withhold obedience, by shewing that God loves it as much as he loves the exercise of mercy; and that, full of compassion as he is, he would not relieve mankind from their misery, unless the rights of his law were respected and established? By reminding us that obedience was required from our Surety as the condition of our restoration to the favour of God, does it authorize us to conclude that, when we are admitted into a justified state, the obligation to it is dissolved, and we may safely trample the precept under foot? These certainly are inferences which cannot be logically deduced from the premises; but in this manner they must reason who affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace tends to licentiousness.

In the third place, The doctrine of free justification is calculated to awaken gratitude and love to the Author of our salvation. The value of the blessing is inestimable, and it is bestowed without money and without price. No condition, properly so called, is prescribed; but all that is required is, that we should believe in him, "who suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."* Had some condition been enjoined, our sense of the Divine goodness would have been weaker, as less grace would have appeared in conferring the blessing; and the selfish idea of merit would have shed its paralyzing influence upon the emotions of the heart. But now, when grace shines with undiminished lustre, and the sinner knows that he is indebted to it alone for the remission of his manifold offences and the hope of a blessed immortality, will not all that is within him be stirred up to glorify his Divine Benefactor? God will appear to him worthy of the most ardent love, and of the best return which he can make for his wonderful and unmerited kindness. He will not dream of recompensing him, for, in this respect, our goodness extends not to God; but the principle of his conduct will be a desire to express the gratitude which he feels, and to do what he can for the honour of him who has done all for his salvation. When gratitude is excited, and the feeling is strong, compliance with the will of a benefactor is

* 1 Pet. iii. 18.

secured. On this ground we affirm, that the doctrine of justification by grace directly tends to advance the interests of holiness. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" The pardoned sinner will say, 'I owe every thing to him; and I am willing to do any thing for him.' "If a man love me, he will keep my words." Those who have no love to God, can be impelled to obey him only by love to themselves. But a Christian acts upon a more generous plan. He loves God, because God has loved him; and hence, like his Lord and Master, he delights to do his will, and his law is in his heart. That doctrine which is best fitted to beget and cherish love to God, is best calculated to promote the interests of holiness. There is no doctrine, therefore, so favourable to good works, as that of justification by grace.

Lastly, The doctrine of justification by faith encourages us to obey, by giving us the sure hope of acceptance. Men will not engage in vain labour, knowing it to be vain. If success be doubtful, their spirits will flag, and their exertions will be languid; but hope will give life, and vigour, and perseverance in their efforts. According to the doctrine of justification by works, we obey in great uncertainty; we know not what will be the result; our endeavours may prove abortive, our services may be found defective, and be rejected on trial. But according to the doctrine of justification by faith, we obey in the full confidence of gracious acceptance. Believers already enjoy the favour of God through the Saviour, in whom they trust. They do not work for a prize that may be lost, for their title to it is secure; but from gratitude, because it is secure, and they know that their hopes will be realized in the eternal possession of it. They know that the curse of the law is repealed, and consequently, that the great obstacle to the acceptance of their persons and services is removed. They know that, although their works being imperfect would be rejected if performed as the condition of the favour of God and future happiness, they will be pleasing to him as testimonies of filial duty and of love without dissimulation. They know that Jesus Christ intercedes for them in the heavenly sanctuary, and recommends their services to his Father by per-

fuming them with the incense of his merit. By these considerations their hearts are enlarged, and they go forward with ease and delight in the way of the commandments. "They therefore so run, not as uncertainly; they so fight not as one that beateth the air." * They are under the eye of an approving witness and a gracious rewarder. They are "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as they know that their labour is not in vain in the Lord." †

It may be thought that an objection so manifestly unfounded, as every person perceives who has carefully and dispassionately studied the subject, is not worthy of a serious refutation. But as it has a plausible sound, is often brought forward, and is calculated to make an impression upon the ignorant and superficial, it is proper that we should be furnished with arguments in reply to it, for the vindication of truth and the removal of prejudice.

The question concerning the tendency of the two opposite systems, might be submitted to the decision of experience. The most imposing speculations turn out to be the dreams of fancy, when they are contradicted by facts. I do not say that all those who maintain justification by works are careless of them; but it is certain, that where this doctrine is taught and believed there is commonly a deplorable want of morality; there is little or no appearance of personal and family religion; and the law of God, although magnified in words, is generally disregarded in practice. I would not say, that all who hold justification by faith abound in good works, for men may profess the doctrine without cordially believing it and feeling its power; but it cannot be denied, that where the doctrine is sincerely embraced there is much serious concern for the salvation of the soul, great diligence in observing the ordinances of grace, and attention to personal and relative duties. The result is exactly the reverse of what some men had calculated, and on some occasions, they have been unable to conceal their surprise and mortification. It is a good remark, that worldly men trust in good works without doing them, and believers do good works without trusting in them. However strange the fact may appear, those who understand

* 1 Cor. ix. 26.

† Ib. xv. 58.

the Scriptures are at no loss to account for it. The one system cannot purify the heart, because it is false ; the other being true, is the power of God unto salvation.

“ Talk they of morals ? O thou bleeding Love !
The grand morality is love of thee.” *

So speaks the poet, and he expresses the feeling of every Christian. That doctrine which eminently displays the love of God to the unworthy, creates a deep sense of our high obligations to the Saviour, and fixes our attention upon him as our hope and our life as well as our great exemplar, is the most powerful engine which ever was contrived for rousing the energies of the soul. You may expect every thing from a willing mind ; and there is no reason to fear, that they will fail to perform their duty, punctually, cheerfully, and steadily, who can say, “ The love of Christ constraineth us.” †

In the days of the Apostle James there were men, as we have seen in a former lecture, ‡ who imagined that they should be saved by faith without works, from a gross misapprehension of the doctrine of grace ; and there have not been wanting successors to them, who have not only imitated their example by trampling upon the precepts of religion, but have adopted the fallacious principle, that the obligations of holiness are superseded by the plan of justifying sinners which the gospel reveals. The strong inclination of the human heart to sin eagerly lays hold of every pretext to indulge itself, and proceeds to such a degree of impiety as to claim a sanction even from God himself, and to shelter itself under the patronage of religion, thus setting God at variance with himself, and introducing war between the different parts of his word, as if the good news by Jesus Christ were a repeal of the law promulgated from the beginning as the rule of righteousness to mankind. The abusers of divine grace have been called Antinomians, or opponents of the law, which, according to them, has lost its power to bind believers to obedience. The name has been ignorantly or malignantly given to those who abhorred the tenet of which it is expressive ; and nothing is more common than to call men Antinomians, because they affirm that we are justified by faith without works, although

* Young's Night Thoughts, N. iv.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

‡ Lect. lxxi.

they openly maintain, and prove by their conduct that they are sincere in maintaining, that believers are bound to yield obedience to the precepts, and are far more zealous of the law in practice than their adversaries. But it is to be lamented, that there have been, and at this moment are, professed Christians who dare openly to teach, that believers are exempted from the law in every sense. On this point, we are as much opposed to them as Arminians are, and have cause to complain of injustice, when we are confounded under the same denomination. We have satisfactorily shewn, that our doctrine leads to no such consequence; and publicly declare, that while we expect to be saved only by grace, this grace teaches "us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."*

* Titus ii. 12—14.

LECTURE LXXIII.

ON ADOPTION.

ADOPTION, A PART OF JUSTIFICATION.—MEANING OF THE TERM, “SONS OF GOD.”—THE PRACTICE AND NATURE OF ADOPTION AMONG MEN.—DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF THE SPIRITUAL PRIVILEGE OF ADOPTION.—THE BENEFITS FLOWING FROM IT.

HAVING illustrated at considerable length, the doctrine of justification, I proceed to consider another privilege of believers in Christ, namely Adoption. There are two reasons why I shall direct your attention to it, first, because it is expressly mentioned in the Scriptures as one of the blessings of redemption; and secondly, because a place is commonly assigned to it in systems of Theology. At the same time, it appears to me to be virtually the same with justification, and to differ from it merely in the new view which it gives of the relation of believers to God, and in the peculiar form in which it exhibits the blessings to which they are entitled. As it implies a change of state, it must be the same, for this change can take place but once; and whether we say that a sinner passes from a state of guilt and condemnation into a state of favour with God, or that he is translated from the family of Satan into the family of Heaven, we express the same fact, and only diversify the terms. He who is justified is adopted, and he who is adopted is justified. But as the Scriptures make use of the term adoption, to denote the change of relation which takes place when we are effectually called, and believers are often exhibited in the character of the children of God,

the subject is well worthy of our attention, and has a claim to a separate illustration.

There are different grounds on which men receive the designation of the Sons of God. First, they are so called on account of their relation to him as their Maker. "Have we not all one Father? and hath not one God created us?"* It is for this reason that, in the third chapter of Luke, where the genealogy of our Saviour is recorded, the Evangelist having traced it up to the progenitor of the human race, by stating in the usual form that such a man was the son of such another man, concludes by saying of Adam, "which was the son of God."† And for the same reason, angels are called his sons. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"‡ Again, the designation of sons of God is given to men in consequence of the external relation in which they stand to him as his people, and the favour with which he regards them. This is obviously the import of the message which God commanded Moses to deliver to Pharaoh. "Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born."|| It is intimated in these words, that he had chosen the Israelites to be his peculiar people; that he regarded them with peculiar affection, and purposed to bestow upon them distinguished marks of his favour; and that this was the reason why he commanded the king of Egypt to give them liberty to depart, and why he would himself interpose by miracles to effect their deliverance. In the New Testament they are described as the children of the kingdom; and on the same ground the character of sons of God, may now be given to the members of the visible church, who are externally in covenant with him, and have been symbolically admitted into his family by baptism. There remains another mode in which men are constituted the sons of God, namely, by adoption. The term is applied indeed to the son-ship of the Israelites, "to whom," as Paul says, "pertained the adoption,"§ because God took them into a relation to himself, in which they did not naturally stand; but it is used, in its proper sense and full import,

* Mal. ii. 10. † Luke iii. 38. ‡ Job xxxviii. 4, 7. || Exod. iv. 22.

§ Rom. ix. 4.

in reference only to believers in Christ. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." * And the same Apostle says in another place, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." †

"To adopt a person," as Kennet says in his *Roman Antiquities*, "was to take him in the room of a son, and to give him a right to all the privileges which accompanied that title. Now the wisdom of the Roman constitution made this matter a public concern. When a man had a mind to adopt another into his family, he was obliged to draw up his reasons, and to offer them to the college of the Pontifices for their approbation. If this was obtained, on the motion of the Pontifices the consul, or some other prime magistrate, brought in a bill at the *Comitia Curiata*, to make the adoption valid. The private ceremony consisted in buying the person to be adopted, of his parents, for such a sum of money formally given and taken; and Suetonius tells us, that Augustus purchased his grandsons Caius and Lucius of their father Agrippa." It may be added to this account, that the parties appeared before the prætor, when the intended father said, "Art thou willing to become my son?" and the son answered, "I am willing." The relation was thus formed according to law, and the adopted son entered into the family of his new father, assumed his name, became subject to his authority, and was entitled to the whole of the inheritance, or to a share of it if there were any other sons.

I have referred to this practice as existing among the Romans, and sanctioned by the laws of the state; but it was not peculiar to them. It appears to have prevailed among the Greeks, the Egyptians, and, I believe, some other nations. We have an example of adoption among the Egyptians in the case of the daughter of Pharaoh the king, concerning

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

† Eph. i. 4—6.

whom it is related that, having accidentally found the infant Moses exposed on the banks of the Nile, she gave him to his mother to be nursed; and that when the child grew, his mother brought him to her, "and he became her son." * He was thus admitted a member of the royal family, and it is mentioned as a proof of the power of his faith, that he renounced this high honour, and chose to take part with his own nation in their afflictions, because they were the people of God: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" † sacrificed the glory and the advantages which he already possessed, and had the prospect of enjoying in consequence of his adoption. It is the opinion of some, that the term adoption in the New Testament, is not borrowed from the Greeks and Romans, but is founded on the style of the Old Testament, in which, as we have seen, the Israelites are called the sons of God. But it is more probable that, as the New Testament was intended for the use of the Gentiles as well as the Jews, it was the design of the writers, when they employed a word familiar to the latter, to refer to the thing denoted by it as it was practised among them, and thus to convey to them an intelligible idea of the spiritual relation between God and the objects of his favour.

Adoption, according to the scriptural sense of the term, is an act of God, by which he pronounces sinful men to be his sons, admits them into his family, and gives them a right to the privileges of his children. With a view to illustrate this general definition, I request your attention to the following particulars.

First, As an adopted son originally belonged to a different family from that into which he was admitted, we must inquire from what family the children of God are taken. We might say then, that they are of the family of Adam, understanding by this expression, not merely that they are his natural offspring, his sons and daughters by lineal descent, but that they were born in his image and after his likeness, and derive from him the guilt, the pollution, and the curse, which he has bequeathed to them as a fatal inheritance. We might accommodate to our present purpose the words of God to his

* Exod. ii. 10.

† Heb. xi. 24.

ancient people, "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye were digged." * 'Look unto Adam your father, and unto Eve that conceived you in sin, and brought you forth in iniquity.' The Scriptures give another view of the subject; and pronounce all men in their fallen state to be the children not only of Adam, but of him by whose artifice they were reduced to their present condition, "Ye are of your father the devil," † said our Lord to the Jews. 'Ye boast of your connexion with Abraham, and found upon it the hope of acceptance with God; but your conduct proves you to be the genuine offspring of the enemy of all righteousness;' for he adds, "the works of your father ye do." Lest, however, we should suppose that this character is applicable to them alone on account of their peculiar depravity manifested in the rejection of the Messiah, the Scripture is careful to comprehend all unregenerated men under the same denomination: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." ‡ To the justness of this description in reference to notorious transgressors, few will be disposed to object. In their blasphemy, their profaneness, their malice, their envy, their violence and cruelty, we distinctly perceive the horrid features of the spirit of darkness. But pride, self-confidence, a dislike of the divine character and laws, repugnance to the will of our Maker, and a constant inclination to sin, which are found in every man who has not been born again, are indications not less certain, that we are guided by the counsels and actuated by the temper of the first rebel against the righteous government of God. "He is the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." || All the children of disobedience, therefore, are his sons. Although they may disown their relation, they daily recognize it by their unholy thoughts and actions, and unless divine mercy interpose, will receive the inheritance of wrath, which is their allotted portion.

Secondly, As an adopted son became a member of a new family, so he upon whom this spiritual privilege is conferred,

* Is. li. 1. † John viii. 44. ‡ 1 John iii. 8, 10. || Eph. ii. 2.

is enrolled among the children of God. Like the prodigal, who had gone into a far country, and, having there wasted his substance in riotous living, was reduced to extreme distress, he returns, or rather by Divine grace is brought back, to the house of his heavenly Father; and his father, to adopt the language of the parable, falling on his neck and embracing him in the arms of his love, does not place him in the condition of a servant, but restores him to the name and the right of a son. And, how glorious is this family to which we are re-united! First in dignity and honour is Jesus Christ himself, who, in his Divine Person, is the eternal Son of God, and, in his mediatorial character, stands in a particular relation to believers. The Scripture calls him "the first-born among many brethren," intimating, that he belongs to the heavenly family, in which he claims precedence, and holds the most distinguished place. He is the Elder Brother; for he and the other children, or those of them who are taken from among men, are partakers of a common nature, and for this cause, "he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."* Next in order are those glorious beings, who, having retained their purity and fidelity, have continued, without interruption, to enjoy the honour and felicity of their primeval state. Angels are the sons of God, as we formerly remarked, and constitute an illustrious portion of the family, distinguished by the excellence of their nature, the superiority of their endowments, the ardour of their love, and their unwearied activity. To them we are united by adoption; for the inhabitants of heaven, and the saints upon earth, compose one holy society, under the protection and government of him in whom all things are gathered together. Lastly, There are the saints triumphant and militant, who, although separated from one another in place, a part being in a state of manhood while the other part can be considered as only in infancy, are all invested with the same high character, and stand in the same relation to God. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Prophets and Apostles, the martyrs and confessors, and believers of every age and nation, are associated in one great brotherhood. Taken by sovereign

* Heb. ii. 11, 12.

grace from the degraded and ruined family to which we naturally belonged, we are introduced into the fellowship of the most glorious creatures in the universe, the bright spirits who minister before the throne of the Eternal in heaven, and the happy men upon whom his own hand has impressed the image of his perfection. “Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” How wonderful the change which takes place in adoption, whether we consider it in itself, or in its consequences ! “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”†

We have seen that spiritual, like civil adoption, consists in translating a person from the family in which he was born, into that of a stranger.

In the case of civil adoption, the translation was made at the desire, and by the authority, of the person who, having no children of his own, had recourse to this expedient to supply the want. In like manner, the admission of sinners into the family of heaven, is the act of God, by whom we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. It is an act of his grace and authority ; of his grace, in choosing persons so unworthy to enjoy this high honour ; of his authority, in dissolving their original connexion, and constituting a new relation between them and himself. Birth, external privileges, corporeal and mental accomplishments, and the suffrages of others, cannot elevate us to this dignity. “We are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”‡ The same sentence which acquits us from guilt and restores us to favour, invests us with the privilege of sonship and all the blessings attached to it. “It shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.”||

The meritorious cause of adoption, is the mediation of

* Heb. xii. 22—24. † 1 John iii. 1. ‡ John i. 13. || Hos. i. 10.

Christ, as we learn from the words formerly quoted : “ God sent forth his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* By taking our nature, Jesus has raised it from its fallen state, in which it was divested of its glory, and so depraved that its Maker could not hold communion with it. Its dignity is restored in the person of our Saviour ; and, through him, it is now worthy to stand in the presence of God, and to be distinguished by the tokens of his love. But this is not all. He has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and procured that the forfeiture of our sonship should be reversed. He has made satisfaction for our sins, and not only appeased the anger of God, but, by his infinitely valuable obedience, obtained for us all the blessings of salvation. “ But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” “ Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.”† His righteousness, imputed to believers, gives them a title to the precious fruits of his death ; and the union with him, which is formed by the Spirit, places them in the same relation to God with himself. “ Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father ; and to my God, and your God.”‡

The last remark which I shall make, relates to the means by which we obtain the actual possession of the privilege of adoption. We have seen that, in civil adoption, the consent of the person to be adopted was demanded, and publicly expressed. Something similar takes place in spiritual adoption. The privilege is offered to us in the Gospel ; but it does not become ours till we accept of it. Although we do not, and cannot merit it, yet our consent is required, and is indispensably necessary. Now, this consent consists in faith, which implies our cordial acceptance of the blessings which Christ purchased for us, and of which God makes a free gift to us in the Gospel. Hence, to believe in Christ, and to receive him, are used in the Scriptures as equivalent terms. ‘ Art thou willing,’ God says, ‘ that I shall be thy Father ?’ The believing sinner answers, ‘ I am willing.’ “ As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons

* Gal. iv. 5.

† Eph. ii. 13, 19.

‡ John xx. 17.

of God, even to them that believe on his name.”* Now, they are no longer aliens and outcasts, but the members of his family, the objects of his affection and care, and heirs of the glory which shall be revealed. “They are called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord hath named.”†

We have traced some points of resemblance between human adoption and our admission into the family of God; but there are some respects in which they differ, and to these I shall now direct your attention.

First, It is scarcely necessary to remark, that the primary cause of adoption among men does not exist in the present case. It was the want of children which gave rise to the practice, and the object in view was to provide, by this expedient, what nature had denied. But this reason cannot for a moment be supposed to have had any influence in procuring our adoption by our heavenly Father; for, besides that he is self-sufficient, and had always a Son, who is his perfect image, and with whom he maintains an intercourse of love, which is the source of ineffable and infinite blessedness; all the creatures in the universe could make no addition to his felicity, and have nothing to present but what they have first received from his bounty. The Divine nature, although single, is not solitary, and possesses in its own fulness the materials of perfect and perpetual bliss.

Secondly, Human adoption was founded on good qualities, real or supposed, in the object; for we cannot conceive any man to have chosen another to be his son, who did not appear to him worthy of this honour. The Scriptures are careful to impress upon our minds the difference with respect to spiritual adoption, by drawing, with the darkest colours, the original character of those upon whom the blessings of salvation are bestowed. It was necessary, as we learn from a passage already quoted, that men should be redeemed from the curse, in order to receive the adoption of sons. They were under a sentence of condemnation for their sins; and appearing to the eye of God guilty and polluted, what could they present to attract his regard? Like the prodigal, they were covered with rags and bloated with crimes, when he was pleased, in his infinite goodness, to receive them into his

* John i. 12.

† Is. lxii. 2.

family. It is on this account that the Apostle John breaks out into the language of admiration when meditating upon the subject: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." *

In the third place, Adoption among men commonly extended only to a single person, or, at most, to a very limited number, for obvious reasons. But spiritual adoption is a privilege enjoyed by thousands and millions. It was the design of God, in appointing Jesus Christ to be the Author of our salvation, to bring many sons to glory. To the question, "Are there few that be saved?" † our Lord declined to return a direct answer, because it was dictated by a spirit of curiosity, which he would not encourage; but when we consult the Scriptures, we find that they are not few, but a great multitude which no man can number; how contrary soever this view of the subject may be to the ideas of bigots, who shut the gates of heaven against all but their own little party. If there was a blank made in the celestial society by the fall of the apostate angels, it will be filled up from the human race; the many mansions in our Father's house will be peopled, and the extent of his family will be proportioned to the invaluable price which was paid for its redemption.

Other points of difference might be mentioned, but passing them, I proceed to inquire what blessings believers enjoy in consequence of their adoption.

First, God sustains the relation of a Father to them: "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." ‡ It will be thought, perhaps, that this is so obvious, that there was no necessity to mention it, as a father and son are correlative terms, and the one suggests the other. But what I mean to fix your attention upon is not the title, but its import, and to remind you that, in consequence of this relation, God is to believers all that is implied in the character of a Father. He bears the most tender love to them; he watches over them with unwearied care; he attends to their interests, and they may repose entire confidence upon his wisdom and goodness. He is a Father who knows their wants, who is never mistaken in his judgment of what will be for their good, who is able to do

* 1 John iii. 1.

† Luke xiii. 23.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 18.

every thing for them, who is always near to succour and protect them, and who will not abandon them even when provoked by their misconduct. The name of Father dispels every fear, and invites respectful familiarity. We feel ourselves emboldened to tell him our sorrows and desires ; to apply to him for counsel, to flee to him as our refuge. If his greatness seems to forbid our approach, if his justice and purity are calculated to repress the fervour of our affection and the eagerness of our hopes, the recollection of the condescension and tenderness of a Father re-animates our hearts, and gives us confidence to draw near to his throne. Who can tell how great a privilege it is, to have the God of heaven and earth for a Father ?

Secondly, The children of God receive the Spirit of adoption. " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts."* The purposes for which he is given, are various. The primary design is to inspire them with the temper, as they are now invested with the character, of sons. Human adoption had no effect of this kind. It changed the state of the person adopted, by translating him from one family to another, and making a person, who was formerly a stranger, his father ; but it produced no change in his dispositions. Hence it might happen, and we may presume that it did sometimes happen, that he who, misled by specious appearances, had adopted him, was disappointed in his expectations, and had reason to repent that he had admitted an unworthy member into his family. But all the members of the spiritual family are distinguished by the resemblance which they bear to their Father. They receive a new nature, as well as a new name. To express this change, they are represented in the Scriptures as begotten again, and born again, to signify that they receive a new spiritual being, and have new views, and feelings, and desires. They are transformed into the image of Christ, and therefore are made like their Father, for Christ is the express image of his person. This change is the work of the Spirit. If the water of baptism is the sign, the efficient cause is the Spirit, whose province it is to beautify the new, as well as the old creation. But this is not the only office which he is appointed to perform. There is another of the utmost importance, which

* Gal. iv. 6.

is indispensably necessary to their comfort, namely, to enable them to ascertain their relation to God, which is not self-evident, and the reality of which they could not establish without his assistance. Hence he is represented in the Scriptures as giving testimony to the fact. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." * In what manner this testimony is given, has been the subject of dispute. It is not, we may venture to say, by a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, announcing to the man this proposition, 'Thou art a son of God;' or by unaccountable impressions on his mind; but in a way consonant to the Scriptures, and to the regular exercise of our faculties. The expression, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits," imports that there is a double testimony, by our own hearts and by him. The one is not given without the other. Now, we may understand how the two witnesses concur, if we conceive the Holy Ghost to give testimony by enabling the saints to embrace the promises with a particular application to themselves, and to exercise distinctly the various Christian graces, so that their existence and genuineness shall be unquestionable. By this process they are assured of their sonship; for the fact is placed beyond doubt, when they perceive in themselves the certain marks of regeneration. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." † The Spirit bears testimony to the sonship of believers, when he brings to light, by his operations upon their souls, the evidences of their adoption; and thus makes their relation to God as manifest as if he assured them of it with an audible voice. Hence they are enabled to call God their Father; not with the presumption of hypocrites, and the indifference of formalists, but with the confidence of faith, and the ardour of filial affection. They call him Father, not only when his providence smiles upon them and even the sinner persuades himself of his love, but in the dark hour of trouble and sorrow; like our Saviour, who still claimed him in the endearing relation, even when he complained that he had forsaken him. In a word, the hope which sustains the heart of the Chris-

* Rom. viii. 16.

† 1 John iii. 14, 19.

tian, the joy which arises within him, the secret refreshment which he experiences in devotional exercises, and the enlargement of his soul in prayer ; these are the blessed fruits of the presence and agency of the Spirit of adoption.

Thirdly, Their heavenly Father provides for all their wants. To care for his children, to supply them, according to his ability, with such things as they need, to feed, and clothe, and educate them ; these are duties which religion and natural affection prescribe to every parent. He who adopted a son, came under an engagement to act in every respect the part of a father. Certainly, then, they who have been admitted into the family of God, may expect all blessings from his goodness, whether pertaining to this world or to the next. A controversy has been agitated, (and what point, great or little, trifling or important, has not been the subject of dispute ?) Whether Christ purchased temporal benefits for believers ? Those who adopt the negative side of the question, will allow that the blessing which accompanies them is owing to his mediation, and only contend, that the things themselves are not the fruits of his death. It is not easy to conceive what valuable purpose can be served by this discussion, except that it affords an opportunity of displaying nice discrimination in separating two things which common apprehension had blended together. It was not necessary to put us on our guard against ascribing too much to our Saviour, and to count and reckon with him, that we might ascertain the precise extent of our obligations ; our grateful feelings towards him have not so strong a tendency to excess, as to stand in need of a check. When we consider that the faithfulness of God is expressly pledged for the temporal provision of his children ; that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come ; that our heavenly Father is represented as knowing that we have need of food and raiment, and as therefore bestowing them ; and that our Saviour has taught his disciples to pray for their daily bread, and, consequently, to ask it in his name and for his sake, we seem to be authorized to rank common benefits among the blessings of the new covenant, and, consequently, to say that we are indebted for them to the same price which was paid for the salvation of our souls.

As nothing on this obscure controversy has ever come under my notice, I know not exactly the grounds on which the purchase of temporal blessings is denied, but presume that it is because they are bestowed upon unbelievers as well as upon believers. This, however, is an argument of no force. The point at issue is, not whether there is any difference between those two classes in the receipt of these blessings, for it is acknowledged that there is none; but, whether there is any difference in respect of right. It is certain that wicked men have no more a right to temporal good things, than a condemned criminal has to the food by which he is sustained till the day of execution. Undoubtedly, he has no claim to it, as he is dead in law, and it is accorded to him solely for the purpose of prolonging his life, till the proper time arrive for subjecting him to the appointed punishment. But believers have a right to the benefits which they enjoy; "for all things," says an Apostle, "are yours, whether things present, or things to come." They have a right to them, from the promise that their bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure. And how did they obtain this promise? For whose sake was it made to them? "In Christ are all the promises yea and amen, to the glory of God." It is through him that a distinction is made between them and other men, that they can look up to God for their daily bread, while others have no ground for any such expectation. In a word, their right to this world, or to an adequate portion of it, which is enumerated among the things which belong to them—"for the world is yours," says Paul—their right to this world is placed upon its proper basis by the Apostle, when he says, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;"* thus referring temporal, as well as spiritual benefits to his mediation, as the cause for which they are communicated to the saints.

If any person should still think that Christ has procured for us, not the benefits themselves, but the blessing which attends them, he is at full liberty to indulge his opinion; but it may be questioned, whether it will contribute in any degree to his piety. "They that fear the Lord shall not lack any good thing." Riches may be denied to them, or may be

* 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

taken from them, but food convenient may be confidently expected. The blessing of heaven is in their portion, however scanty it may be; and “a little which a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.” “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”* With respect to the provision which he makes for the souls of his children, we are all agreed. As he gave manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, so he gives them his Word, to be the mean of communicating spiritual good things; and it is sometimes compared to milk, and sometimes to strong meat, to intimate that it is adapted to the diversified circumstances and states of the members of his family, to the babe in Christ, and to the full-grown man. His care of them is represented in a solemn and impressive manner in the sacred Supper, when they are assembled at his table to eat bread and drink wine, as the symbols of heavenly blessings, and all are reminded that he nourishes their souls by his invisible grace. The design of all his institutions is, that they may come, “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”†

In the fourth place, The children of God are subjected to paternal discipline. When we judge according to our feelings, this may seem to be a punishment rather than a privilege, for “no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous.” But, as in a human family, he that spares the rod hates his son, because, through mistaken tenderness, he suffers him to escape with impunity when he has committed a fault, and thus permits his wayward inclinations to gather strength, and vicious habits to be formed which will entail misery upon him here and hereafter; so, in the family of God, the want of discipline would be an evidence, not of love, but of neglect and indifference to the interests of the members. The Scripture therefore says, “Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”‡ He chastises him because he loves him; and, however paradoxical this may appear upon a superficial view, its truth will be manifest to those who consider the end proposed and the effect produced. God chastises his children,

* Ps. xxxvii. 16, 3.

† Eph. iv. 13.

‡ Heb. xii. 6.

that they may be partakers of his holiness ; and holiness is not only the dress and ornament of the members of his family, but is indispensably necessary to their peace and happiness, both in this world and in the next. Men may think, and even the saints themselves may suspect, when their trials are manifold and severe, that their heavenly Father has disowned and forsaken them. But this is not the only instance in which human reason egregiously errs. What seems to our hasty and limited observation to betoken ill, is the surest proof of his favour ; and a state of uninterrupted ease and enjoyment, which we would prefer, would furnish a more solid ground of apprehension. “ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.” *

Lastly, God will bestow upon his children an eternal inheritance. “ If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” † Children, by the law of nature and nations, inherit the property of their father ; and an adopted son possessed all the rights and privileges of a son by descent. At the death of the person who adopted him, he was legally entitled to his property. There is an inheritance which belongs to the family of God, and every man who is received into it is an heir. The expression, “ joint heirs with Christ,” imports that the inheritance originally pertains to our Redeemer, who obtained it for himself and those whom he calls his brethren by his meritorious obedience, and that their right to it is founded on their connexion with him. It is an inheritance of glory and felicity, “ incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven” for them. Whatever God now is to angels and glorified saints, and whatever he will be to them through an endless duration, in which their faculties will be continually expanding, and they will be filled with bliss to the utmost extent of their capacity ; —for all this, “ which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive,” the adopted sons of God are authorized to hope. Even in this world, how happy does the earnest of the inheritance make them ! How divine the peace which sheds its influence upon

* Heb. xii. 7, 8.

† Rom. viii. 17.

their souls ! How pure and elevating the joy which, in some select hours, springs up in their bosoms ! How are they raised above the pains and the pleasures of life, while, in the contemplations of faith, they anticipate their future abode in the higher regions of the universe ! But these are only an earnest. Their hearts beat high with the expectation of something too sublime to be uttered or adequately conceived ; and, while their breasts heave with the vehemence of desire, they breathe out, in broken and impassioned accents, their longings for the time when they shall be delivered from the infirmities of the flesh and the imperfections of the present state, which prevent the full enjoyment of infinite good. “ We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now : and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to-wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope : but hope that is seen is not hope ; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” *

* Rom. viii. 22—25.

LECTURE LXXIV.

ON SANCTIFICATION.

SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF THE TERM, SANCTIFICATION.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.—SANCTIFICATION VIEWED AS A PRIVILEGE, AND AS A DUTY.—IMPLIES THE MORTIFICATION OF SIN, AND INCREASE OF POSITIVE HOLINESS.—EXTENT OF HOLINESS ATTAINABLE IN THIS LIFE.

THE blessing which in the next place claims our attention, is Sanctification. But before I proceed to explain its nature, it is necessary to ascertain the Scriptural meaning of the term.

The word, to sanctify, bears a variety of senses which are considerably different. It sometimes signifies to separate a person or thing from its common use to some particular purpose, even when there is no reference to religion. Thus, in the seventh verse of the twenty-second chapter of Jeremiah, God says, in our translation, “I will prepare,” but according to the original, “I will sanctify destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons; and they shall cut down the choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.” Again, to sanctify, often signifies to separate from a common to a sacred use, or to dedicate to the service of God. In this sense, the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were holy; the priests and Levites were holy; the temple erected on Mount Zion was holy; and Jerusalem was called the holy city. Considered in themselves, these persons and things had no more sanctity than other persons and things; their holiness was merely relative, and arose from their consecration to reli-

gious uses. God sanctified our Saviour when he set him apart to the mediatorial office, and sent him into the world to execute it; and Christ sanctified himself when he assumed that office, and devoted himself to the performance of its duties. It is worthy of observation, with respect to the words *καθαρίζειν* and *ἁγιάζειν*, which signify *to cleanse* and *to purify*, that, when used to express the effect of the sacrifice of Christ upon his people, they do not denote internal purification, but dedication to God: "Jesus, that he might sanctify—*ἵνα ἁγιάσῃ*—the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate."* Now, the effect of blood shed as an atonement for sin is, not to cleanse us from pollution, but to free us from guilt and to restore us to the favour of God: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, —*ἁγιάζει*—sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?"† The effect of the legal sacrifices is compared to that of the death of Christ. The effect of the legal sacrifices was to absolve the offerer from the guilt of his sins so far that he escaped the temporal penalty which he had incurred, and was admitted into the sanctuary. (This is called "sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh.") The effect of the death of Christ is to purify the conscience, to obtain for us full pardon, and thus to give us boldness to enter into the holiest of all. There are several other senses of the word, to sanctify. We sanctify the Sabbath when we regard it as more sacred than other days, and perform its appropriate duties. We sanctify the Lord our God, when we treat him with that reverence which is due to him on account of the transcendent excellence of his nature, by which he is distinguished or separated from all other beings. And God sanctifies himself when he manifests his glory. This discussion will not appear unnecessary to any of you who wish to acquire an accurate knowledge of the language of Scripture; and I conclude with remarking, that the idea of separation is implied in all these uses of the term.

I proceed to the last sense of the word, in which it is to be at present understood. When we say, that those who are

* Heb. xiii. 12.

† Ib. ix. 13, 14.

justified by faith are also sanctified, our meaning is, that they are made holy, not merely by consecration to the service of God, but by the infusion of his grace, which purifies them from the pollution of sin, and renews them in the whole man after his image. It is plain, from the following passage itself, as well as from the connexion in which it is introduced, that, in this sense, the word to sanctify is used. It is a prayer of the Apostle, subjoined to an exhortation to abstain from all appearance of evil: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." * When the same Apostle says, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication," † he evidently refers to purity of heart and conduct. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations, as it is acknowledged by all that there is an internal holiness by which true Christians are characterized, and that the regularity of the life does not alone answer the demands of religion: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." ‡

As justification and sanctification are blessings inseparably connected, it will assist us in forming correct ideas of both, to mark carefully the points in which they differ. They differ in their order: justification precedes, and sanctification follows; a sinner is pardoned and restored to the favour of God, before the Spirit is given to renew him more and more after his image. They differ in their object: justification takes away the guilt of sin, or the obligation to punishment; sanctification cleanses us from its stain or pollution. They differ in their form: justification is a judicial act, by which the sinner is pronounced righteous; sanctification is a physical or moral act, or rather a series of such acts, by which a change is effected in the qualities of the soul. The one, therefore, is called an act, to signify that it is perfected at once; the other is called a work, to signify that it is progressive. Justification being an act passed in a moment, is equal in all believers; sanctification exists in different degrees of advancement in different individuals. In a word, the one changes our state,

* 1 Thess. v. 23.

† Ib. iv. 3.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

translating us from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance; the other changes our nature, or makes those holy who were unholy. I shall add only one difference more, which relates to their matter. In justification, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; in sanctification, an inherent righteousness is communicated; and upon the whole it appears, that in justification we receive a title to heaven, and by sanctification we are prepared for it, or "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life."*

It is worthy of notice, that, in the well known enumeration of the privileges of Christians, when Paul represents the series as a chain stretching from eternity to eternity, sanctification is not specified as one of the links. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."† We account for the omission by supposing, either that the Apostle intended only to state the process according to which a right to eternal life, and the consequent enjoyment of it, are obtained, (and the right depends solely upon justification, which ensues upon the faith wrought in the heart when the sinner is effectually called); or that sanctification is virtually included in the privileges which are explicitly stated. It is implied in effectual calling, in which the soul undergoes a spiritual change, or is regenerated, and the foundation is laid of its future progress in holiness; or it is implied in glorification, which will consist in the perfect state of the soul as well as of the body, and may be said to be begun in the present life, because so far as the soul is conformed to the image of God it is already glorified, and hence believers are said to be "changed," even in this world, "into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."‡

The difference between sanctification and regeneration is not a difference in nature and kind, like the difference between it and justification. They are, if I may speak so, parts of one whole. In regeneration there is an infusion of spiritual life into the soul, in which life all the graces or all the holy tempers of the Christian are virtually included: In sanctification those graces are unfolded and matured,

* Col. i. 12.

† Rom. viii. 30.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

and exert their native influence upon the conduct. In regeneration the living seed is sown, and begins to germinate and shew itself above ground: In sanctification it grows up, and yields fruit, according to the parable in some thirty, in some sixty, and in some a hundred fold. In regeneration the new creature is formed, but although no member or feature is wanting they are diminutive and feeble, and it is yet but a babe: In sanctification the body grows in all its parts, acquires vigour and activity, and advances towards the full stature of a perfect man in Christ. In short, it is the same work which is carried on in regeneration and sanctification, according to the words of an Apostle, "He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." *

Sanctification may be considered as a privilege, and as a duty. In the one view it is the work of God, and in the other it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace. As a privilege it is the subject of promise and of prayer. It is promised in the following words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." † It was the subject of our Lord's intercessory prayer for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" ‡ and it should be the subject of the prayers of Christians for themselves. "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law." || We may afterwards have an opportunity to speak of sanctification as a privilege, when we come to consider its advantages; and I shall only observe, that as it is indispensably necessary to our admission into the immediate presence of God, so it is the source of great happiness upon earth. The foundation of a Christian's peace is the atonement and intercession of the Saviour, in whom God is reconciled; but there is a peace which flows from holiness, and is the natural effect of the cessation of the tumultuary motions of sin, and of the influence of the mild virtues which religion inspires. "Great

* Phil. i. 6. † Ez. xxxvi. 25—27. ‡ John xvii. 17. || Ps. cxix. 34, &c.

peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." * I may add, that it is the high privilege of a creature to be conformed to the image of his Maker. As He is the first and most excellent of all beings, they stand highest in the scale who bear the nearest resemblance to him. If holiness is the glory of God, it is also the glory of man.

Sanctification considered as a duty, is our work. In this light it is represented in the Scriptures, when we are called to "be holy," to "make" to ourselves "a new heart," and to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." † But as I remarked before, in this work man is assisted by grace ; for we can do nothing of ourselves, and it is God "who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure." It is called the work of man, not as if he could change his heart, or when the change is effected could carry it forward to perfection, but as he diligently uses the means, trusting in the divine blessing which renders them effectual.

Although in regeneration holy principles are infused into the soul, yet the change produced is only partial. No Christian grace is wanting in the regenerated man, and no sin or sinful inclination retains sovereign power ; but the graces are imperfect, and remaining depravity continues to operate, and sometimes prevails. The truth of this statement is manifest from the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, in which we find that in Paul, who is a specimen of other believers, there were two principles, the one of sin and the other of holiness, between which there was a perpetual conflict ; and the victory was sometimes on the one side, and sometimes on the other. Two things, therefore, are implied in sanctification, the mortification of sin, and the increase of positive holiness. These are not so distinct that they can go on at different times, for the one necessarily accompanies the other ; but in explaining the nature of sanctification, they require to be separately illustrated.

The mortification of sin does not consist solely in abstinence from outward transgressions in which we had previously indulged, but have abandoned by an effort upon ourselves. Of such an effort, any man is capable by his natural powers,

* Ps. cxix. 165. † 1 Pet. i. 15. Ezek. xviii. 31. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

and without the influence of any moral consideration, when he is excited solely by a regard to reputation, to health, and to his secular interests. External purity, as our Lord has shewn by the example of the Pharisees, may exist, while the heart is foul with the deepest stains of pollution. Nor should it be supposed, that the mortification of sin has taken place, because some sinful inclination which formerly predominated is weakened, or perhaps has disappeared, if other inclinations survive, or if in the room of that which has ceased a new disposition has sprung up, different in form but in its general nature equally criminal. A man who was once a profligate is become sober; but then he is now slavishly devoted to the world, and his heart which was debased by sensuality, is narrowed and hardened by avarice; or it may be that, although no new vice should shew itself in his character, he is puffed up with pride, and glories in his virtue. In these and similar cases, sin retains its original strength, but works in a more concealed manner, or accomplishes its purpose in a different way. The mortification of the body has been often mistaken for the mortification of sin. Men who have withdrawn from society and retired into deserts, and there submitted to the most painful privations, and performed with determined perseverance a tedious round of religious duties, have imagined that they had attained a degree of sanctity, to which no man could pretend, who was living amidst the commerce of the world. They did not consider, that in their solitudes where they were not exposed to external temptations, sinful propensities which were supposed to be eradicated, might have only lain dormant for want of excitement, and might have revived if they had been brought back to society, like the weeds which disappear in winter, but shew themselves again at the return of spring. I would by no means affirm, that such men were all hypocrites, or that they were all deceived, for from the little that I know of their history and their writings, I believe that some of them were truly pious; but I have no doubt that many of them, if they had told the truth, would have confessed that they often cast a longing look towards the world which they had forsaken, like Jerome, who honestly acknowledged that during his seclusion in Palestine, his thoughts frequently wandered after the pleasures of Rome.

The mortification of sin is founded in hatred of it, and not simply in fear of its consequences. It is connected with the love of God, who holds sin in abhorrence, and whose will it is that we should purify ourselves from it. It aims at subduing and extirpating not only those sins which are particularly odious, on account of their grossness and their contrariety to the general sentiments and feelings of mankind, but every known sin, however venial the world may esteem it; and if there is any sin about a believer of which he is not aware, it also is included, in this sense, that he will be content with nothing less than universal purification, and is earnestly desirous that not a single stain should be left. It is carried on not in his own strength, but by the means which God has appointed, and the assistance which he graciously affords; by faith and prayer and watchfulness, and determined resistance. It is not the work of a day, but of life. Sin is like a man who has received a wound which has enfeebled him, but has not entirely deprived him of strength. He is not dead but dying; he is still capable of action, and even of vigorous efforts; and his antagonist must therefore be upon his guard, and watch for an opportunity to inflict new wounds which will terminate the struggle. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth."* In consequence of the interest which the believer has obtained in the death of Christ, the power of sin is broken, and it will be reduced more and more, by the grace which God is ready to communicate, if he humbly ask and diligently improve it. In this way only can he hope for success; and, accordingly, Paul concludes the account of his internal conflict with thanksgiving to God, who had enabled him to resist and in some degree to overcome. "I thank God," he says, "through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, and with the flesh the law of sin;"* intimating that, although depravity still lurked in him and made efforts to regain the mastery, yet it existed only in the lower part of his nature, and the superior principles, the understanding, the conscience, and the will, were elevated to the service of God.

The mortification of sin does not imply its utter extirpation, but the reduction of its influence within narrower limits;

* Col. iii. 5.

+ Rom. vii. 25.

for however earnestly a Christian may wish that it should cease to exist in his soul, complete exemption from it, as we shall afterwards see, is unattainable in the present state. It is mortified when his views of its vileness are clearer and more affecting, and, consequently, his hatred of it is more intense; when he becomes more quick in detecting it under its most specious forms, as well as more active in searching it out; when he is excited to more frequent and fervent prayer for deliverance from it; when from increased aversion he is more vigilant in observing its motions, and using precautions against its attacks; when its efforts become less frequent and more faint, like those of a man who is languishing under his wounds; when he is more deeply humbled for the remains of it which he still perceives; and when for having consented to it on any occasion, he feels more profound grief, and is more speedily recovered by repentance. When David was guilty of a great transgression in the affair of Bathsheba, he gave a melancholy proof that the power of depravity was strong within him; but we cannot doubt that this event ultimately contributed to weaken its interests, when we reflect upon his bitter repentance, his humiliating confessions, and his earnest supplications.

Thus, by the grace of God, the Christian dies to sin, and sin dies in him; or, in other words, he hates it more, and its influence over him is diminished. ‘He lays aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset him.’ The natural consequence is, that his conduct is purer, is more free from acts of sin, as the fruit falls off from a tree when the root is destroyed or injured.

Let us proceed to the second division of the subject, namely, the increase of positive holiness. This our Church expresses by “living unto righteousness,” and the Scripture, by “having our fruit unto holiness.” In proportion as the power of sin is circumscribed, there is more ample space for the Christian graces to grow and flourish. The vigour of the new man will advance, as that of the old man declines. Let us consider the progress of sanctification, in relation to the different powers of the soul.

First, The understanding is more and more illuminated by the word and Spirit of truth. The first illumination takes

place in regeneration, when the blind eyes of the sinner are opened, and he who, while he was a natural man, could not receive the things of the Spirit of God, having become a spiritual man, is enabled to discern them. But there is much room for improvement ; and hence, we find an Apostle praying in behalf even of those who were savingly acquainted with the Gospel, that “ the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give to them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, that the eyes of their understanding might be enlightened.”* Their apprehensions of divine things become more distinct, and steady, and comprehensive, and affecting. Their views are enlarged of God, of Christ, of themselves, of their duty, of sin, of the world, of future and invisible things. As knowledge was communicated to the mind of man in his creation, the restoration of it is necessary that he may be renewed after the image of his Maker. I do not mean speculative knowledge, of which depraved men and infernal spirits are possessed ; but knowledge accompanied with suitable affections towards the things known. As natural light not only renders objects visible, but beautifies the face of nature with a variety of colours, so the knowledge communicated to the people of God does not merely expand and improve the intellect, but gives a new moral aspect to the whole soul. And the necessity of supernatural illumination will be manifest, if we reflect that the understanding is the leading faculty, which not only, if I may speak so, points out the path to be pursued by the other powers of the soul, but excites them by the attractive and interesting views which it presents. Complete ignorance would be followed by a death-like torpor of the soul, and man would remain in a state of inaction, except so far as he was stimulated by his bodily appetites. Knowledge awakens his dormant faculties. It exhibits objects of love and fear, of hope and aversion, and gives rise to active exertions, with a view to obtain what is good, and to avoid what is evil. As God begins, so he carries on to perfection, the work of the new creation, by the communication of light. “ The new man is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him who created him.”†

* Eph. i. 17, 18.

† Col. iii. 10.

Secondly, In sanctification the will of the believer is rendered more and more conformable to the will of God. In this the essence of holiness consists. As Cicero says, that to have the same desires and aversions, is the consummation of friendship; so we may say, that to be like minded with God, to be entirely resigned to him, to choose what he chooses, and to refuse what he refuses, is the highest moral perfection of a creature. Absolute conformity to the will of God is not attainable in this world, and exists only in heaven, where his will is so done by its blessed inhabitants, that they are proposed as a pattern to us. But it is the effect of regenerating grace, to subdue our rebellious hearts, and to bring them under subjection to the authority of our Maker. This is their predominant state; but it is often disturbed by the wayward movements of the will; and it is the design of the Holy Spirit, in his operations upon it, to correct and restrain its aberrations, and to reduce it to a state of habitual submission. The object proposed is, to establish a complete moral dependence upon God; and, with this view, to make the subjects of his influence cease more and more from their own views, and desires, and pursuits. Without pretending to explain what power the Holy Ghost secretly exerts upon the soul, we may say that the effect is produced by means of the light that he gives to the mind; in which, the will of God appears not only supreme and sacred, but so just, and wise, and good, that nothing is more consonant to the dictates of reason, as well as to the commands of religion, than that we should acquiesce in it without reserve and without a murmur. Thus are the people of God led to submission, not only when his will is enforced and recommended by the nature of the duty which it enjoins; but when, naked and unsupported, it demands our obedience, solely because it is his will. In this abstract form it was exhibited to Adam, when the injunction was given to him, to abstain from the fruit of a particular tree in the garden, there being no reason for abstinence but the simple prohibition. It appears equally absolute still in many of the dispensations of Providence, of which no other account can be given, than that such is the decree of heaven; and it is a proof of no inconsiderable progress in holiness, when the person who is tried in this manner, bows to his sovereign Lord,

and says, ' Good is his will.' Job is an example, whose submission amidst the greatest afflictions, was expressed in these remarkable words : " The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord."* When a Christian finds that he is less disposed to consult with flesh and blood, and more to consult the Scriptures ; that he is sincerely desirous to know what is his duty, and more diligent than before to ascertain it ; that every intimation of the Divine pleasure commands his attention, and inspires him with holy reverence ; that he is more ready, and cheerful, and determined in obedience ; and that his supreme desire is to glorify God and to be accepted of him : when this is the prevailing state of his mind, it is evident that God has made him willing in a day of power, and that the work of sanctification is advancing in his soul towards perfection.

Thirdly, In sanctification, all the holy principles or habits, as they are sometimes called, of believers are strengthened. If the affections are considered as modifications of the will, they are purified in proportion to its conformity to the standard of rectitude. The love and hatred, the fear and hope of the believer, will be excited by proper objects, and be regulated with respect to their degree. While the soul is thus affected by proper objects, the lower appetites will be restrained and subjugated, and, although not eradicated as they are essential principles of our nature, will be directed and retained within due bounds, by the light of the understanding and the authority of conscience. The change effected by sanctifying grace may be ascertained by the different feelings with which external things are now regarded. Once, they alone were deemed to be important, but now they are considered as insignificant, or, at least, as subordinate ; once, they stirred up strong and impetuous desire, but now they awaken comparatively faint emotions ; once, under their influence, the soul was degraded and brutified, as if it had lost its nature and were merely the principle of animal life and feeling, but now they are counteracted by the spirituality of the mind, which, surrounded with earthly things, soars aloft and holds high intercourse with heaven : " By the cross of Christ," says Paul, " the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." † In

* Job i. 21.

† Gal. vi. 14.

proportion to the increasing vigour of holy habits, the moral connexion of the soul with this world will be dissolved, and the impression diminished which the latter was accustomed to make. The illumination of the mind has a powerful effect upon our active powers. Faith is strengthened by clear apprehensions of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Love grows warmer, as the love of God is more steadily contemplated and more sensibly felt. Hope brightens at the glorious prospect of life and immortality which the gospel displays. Repentance melts into more copious tears, while it looks at the cross, where the vileness of sin is exhibited with an evidence which the heart feels, but words cannot express. All the graces grow under the influence of the truth, which first gave them birth, and now rears them up to manhood. When the Christian “is adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity,” he is “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* The work of sanctification is not only begun, but is going on to perfection. If we inquire how far the work of sanctification extends, we answer, in the language of our church, that it extends to “the whole man.”† The Apostle Paul says that God sanctifies his people “wholly in soul, body, and spirit.”‡ Man is a compound being, and, according to the opinion of the moderns, learned and unlearned, consists of two parts, a body and a soul. But a different system was held by the ancients, who called man—*τριμερης ὑποστασις*—a *three-fold person or substance*, affirming that, besides the body, there were two internal principles, the soul and the spirit, or, as it was sometimes called, the mind. The soul—*ἡ ψυχή*—they defined to be the principle of life, or that which distinguishes animate from inanimate things, and they considered it as in itself irrational, as the seat of the appetites and passions, as affected by the body, and as the medium by which the body affects the spirit. The spirit, *το πνεῦμα*, or *ὁ νοῦς*, the mind, was rational, and acted with reason; and it was its office to contend with the body, and to regulate the movements of the inferior principle. It would be foreign to our purpose to

* 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

† Conf. xiii. 2.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 23.

inquire whether this, or the modern theory of human nature, is true. The question is not decided by the words of the Apostle ; for, as it was not his business to teach philosophy but theology, he might adopt, without intending to give his sanction to a particular system, language familiar to those whom he addressed, and, at the same time, well fitted to convey the information which he meant to communicate. He explains his meaning by the word *ὁλοτελής*, which is translated “wholly,” and subjoins the words soul, body, and spirit, to signify, in the style of the age, that the work of sanctification is universal, or that every part of human nature is the subject of it ; the soul in all its faculties, understanding, will, and affections or passions, and also the body. Strictly, indeed, the body is not the subject of sanctification, because, being a material substance, it is susceptible neither of virtue nor of vice ; but it is sanctified in this sense, that it is dedicated to the service of God, and its organs and members, which were formerly employed in sinful actions and were excitements to them, are converted into the instruments of righteousness. It is called in Scripture, “the temple of the Holy Ghost.” *

But while sanctification extends to our whole nature, and leaves no part of it unrenewed, we must not imagine the work to be so complete, as to restore us to a state of perfect purity. There have been men, and there still are, who maintain that sinless perfection is attainable in the present life. This was the doctrine of the founder of the Methodists, and I presume it is still held by his followers. It is acknowledged that the Scriptures call upon us to aim at perfection, and speak of some individuals in such a manner as may lead superficial readers to conclude that they had fully succeeded. They call upon us to “behold the perfect man,” and give this as the character of certain individuals. But, one part of Scripture should be explained in consistency with another ; and it is contrary to the laws of legitimate interpretation, to wrest a particular expression to a sense at variance with the known and avowed sentiments of the author. If we take this rule along with us, we shall immediately perceive that, in the cases before us, perfection can mean nothing more than integrity or sincerity.

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

He is perfect who unfeignedly loves God, and has a respect to all his commands.

That the most eminent saints mentioned in Scripture, even some of those to whom the epithet, perfect, is applied, were not free from sin, is evident from the defects and blemishes which are discovered in their conduct. The praise of high attainments will undoubtedly be conceded to the Apostle of the Gentiles, and it is not easy to conceive upon what principle any man could persuade himself that he or others have excelled him; but, as he expressly disclaims any pretension to perfection, so the relation which he has given of his experience, demonstrates that he uses, on this occasion, the language not only of humility but of truth. "I see," he says, "a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." * Not to confine our attention to a particular case, let us recollect the words of the wise man, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." † And observe in what strong terms an Apostle rejects the doctrine of sinless perfection, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." ‡ It is a doctrine, you see, which will be maintained only by ignorant presumption. Were any person truly perfect, he would not stand in need of those institutions or means of grace, which God has provided for the perfecting of the saints. In particular, daily prayer for the forgiveness of sin would not be his duty; he would enjoy uninterrupted communion with God; would not be subject to discipline, which presupposes errors and failings; and, having spent a life undisturbed by pain and sorrow, would be translated, we may presume, into a better world without suffering death.

The possibility of perfection in the present state, could be conceived only by men who were ignorant of Scripture and of themselves. They must have first lowered the standard of holiness. They must have narrowed and abated the demands of the divine law, to meet their fancied attainments. It is impossible that any person in his senses, could suppose himself capable of performing that high obedience which the law, uncorrupted by human interpretation, evidently requires.

* Rom. vii. 23.

† Eccl. vii. 20.

‡ 1 John i. 8.

We might justly call in question the veracity, or the understanding, of the man who should seriously assure us, that he loved God with all his strength, and soul, and mind, and heart, and loved his neighbour as himself. At any rate, we may call in question his Christianity ; for his language and sentiments are as contrary to those of a genuine believer, as darkness is to light. The latter is distinguished by a humble estimate of himself. He acknowledges that he fails more or less in every duty, that he is daily guilty of sin, that he could not stand if God should enter into judgment with him, and that he has no hope of acceptance but through the mediation of Christ. As these acknowledgments are dictated by his feelings, so they are in exact accordance with the Scriptures. The perfectionist belongs to a different class ; and his arrogance and self-confidence manifest that, while he boasts of occupying the first form, he is a mere tyro in the school of Christ, and has need that some one should teach him what are the first principles of the oracles of God.

LECTURE LXXV.

ON SANCTIFICATION.

SANCTIFICATION THE WORK OF THE THREE PERSONS OF THE GODHEAD.—THEIR SEVERAL OFFICES.—NATURE AND EFFECT OF THE SPIRIT'S OPERATIONS ON THE SOULS OF BELIEVERS IN SANCTIFICATION.—CHRIST, THE PATTERN OF SANCTIFICATION.—RULE OF SANCTIFICATION, THE WORD.—EXTERNAL MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.—FAITH AS A MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

HAVING in the preceding lecture explained the nature of Sanctification, I proceed to take notice of several particulars, the consideration of which is necessary to give us a complete view of the subject.

I shall speak, in the first place, of the Author of sanctification ; and here we shall see that, like other divine works, it is ascribed to all the Persons of the Trinity. I would remark, in general, that there is no inaccuracy or confusion in attributing the same work sometimes to one Person and sometimes to another ; because, although the Persons are distinct, the Essence is one and indivisible, and because the same work is said to be performed by one, in one view, and by another, in another. In relation to the present case, all the Persons in the Godhead are concerned in the sanctification of the soul ; but a different office is assigned to each.

First, This work is ascribed to the Father in those passages in which prayer is offered up to him, that he would sanctify us, and make us perfect in every good work, and in which he promises to circumcise our hearts to love and fear him,

and to give us a new heart and a right spirit.* In the economy of redemption, he is exhibited as the fountain of grace. All spiritual blessings are his gifts; they originate in his goodness, and are bestowed according to his will. To this blessing he predestinated his people before the foundation of the world; and he appointed and prepared the means by which it was attained and is actually communicated. As “this is the will of God, even our sanctification,” so it is by his power, (exerted in the manner which will be afterwards pointed out, when we come to speak of the agency of the Spirit,) that the renovation of the soul after his image is begun, and advanced, and perfected.

Secondly, The work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”† He is the Author of this work, as he has obtained for us the privilege of sanctification, by his obedience unto death. This may be explained in two ways. First, He has done that, in consideration of which God bestows so great a blessing upon us. In ourselves, we were unquestionably unworthy of it; and in creatures guilty and polluted, there was nothing to induce God to restore his image, which they had impiously defaced. As the whole obedience of our Saviour was performed not for himself but for us, and as it was meritorious in the highest degree not simply because it was perfect but because he was a person of infinite dignity, his righteousness is to be considered as the procuring cause of those supernatural influences by which we regain that holiness in which man was created, and which was the chief glory of his nature. “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” He “loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.”‡ Secondly, Jesus Christ has removed the curse, which retained men under the dominion of sin by keeping them at a distance from God; and has

* 1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. xiii. 21. Deut. xxx. 6. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, &c.

† Tit. ii. 14.

‡ John xvii. 19. Eph. v. 25—27.

brought them into a state in which they may receive those influences by which the purification of their nature will be effected. That you may understand this point, let me remind you that the guilt of sin, or the curse of the law, which is founded upon it, is a mighty and insurmountable obstacle in the way of any gracious communication from God to the sinner. Hence the law is said to be "the strength of sin." * It is its strength, as it protects it, if I may speak so, against any power which could overthrow or weaken its dominion, and leaves it at full liberty to exert itself in enslaving more and more its unhappy subjects. While men remain in this state, all the arguments which are employed to convince their understandings, to awaken their consciences, and to interest their affections, and all the dispensations of providence, whether calculated to alarm or to allure, have no permanent effect. The divine blessing, without which Paul plants and Apollos waters in vain, does not accompany them. By the removal of guilt, a channel is opened in which the grace of God flows into the soul; and thus you perceive the connexion between the death of Christ and our sanctification. "Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." † The sanctification which was the immediate design of his death, is not moral but legal sanctification; and it signifies, I apprehend, in this place, our dedication to the service of God by the removal of the guilt of sin, which was the great impediment to our acceptance; but moral sanctification is the certain consequence. "Our old man," says the same Apostle, in another Epistle, "is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." ‡ The language is highly figurative, but is not difficult to be understood. Our old man is our corrupt nature; and it is said to be crucified with Christ, to signify that, in virtue of his death upon the cross, the power of sin is broken. The proper effect of an atonement is not purification from the pollution of sin, but deliverance from guilt; but the former is ascribed to the sacrifice of Christ as well as the latter, because it brings us under the operation of grace, because it consecrates us to God, who

* 1 Cor. xv. 56.

† Heb. xiii. 12.

‡ Rom. vi. 6.

gives the Holy Spirit to qualify us for his service. This remark is necessary to enable you to understand several passages of Scripture which speak of this subject, and to prevent you from misapprehending the language of Theologians, who sometimes express themselves in such a manner as might lead you to think, that the death of Christ is not only the meritorious, but the efficient cause of sanctification. This impression is made, when we are told that we are sanctified "by receiving the atonement into our hearts," and by "having the blood of Christ conveyed into our hearts;" and even when such Scriptural expressions as have been quoted are used without explanation. The language of Scripture, with respect to the effect of the death of Christ, was better understood in the Apostolic age than it is now, because sacrifices were then offered by both Jews and Gentiles, and every person knew their design, and the efficacy which they were supposed to exert. The language of Scripture is always proper and emphatic; but when metaphors occur, if we wish to convey distinct ideas into the minds of others, we must give the literal sense; and, if there is any danger of mistake, we should guard against it by the use of plain and appropriate terms. He who contents himself with telling us that we are sanctified by the death of Christ, or by the sprinkling of his blood, explains nothing, and, by dealing much in such phraseology, is apt to mislead.

In the third place, This work is ascribed to the Holy Ghost. Hence we read of the renovation and sanctification of the Spirit,* and our walking in God's statutes is said to be the effect of the inhabitation of the Spirit in our hearts. The grace by which we are sanctified, proceeds from the Father by the Son, and is applied by the Spirit. Thus all the Persons of the Trinity are concerned in our restoration. The part which each acts is important and necessary, and the office of the third Person is not less glorious than that of the second. Our attention is peculiarly directed to our Lord Jesus Christ; and it is right that it should be so, for he appears with great prominence in the scheme of our salvation, and offered the atonement by which all the divine perfections were glorified in the highest, and the everlasting covenant was confirmed.

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. 1 Peter i. 2. Tit. iii. 5, &c.

But without the co-operation of the Spirit, his labours and sufferings would have been in vain. In a state of moral insensibility, with blinded minds and unfeeling consciences, men would have made no use of the atonement for their reconciliation to God, and continuing in the pollution of sin, which renders them loathsome in his sight, they must have been excluded from his presence, and the blessedness of communion with him. Christ purchased redemption, but the Spirit applies it. The work of Christ was accomplished by his humiliation, and sorrows, and death ; it, as it were, strikes our senses, and on this account makes a more powerful impression. But if we attentively consider the work of the Spirit, we shall perceive that it also displays grace, and love, and power, worthy of the highest admiration. To enter into a human soul foul with the deepest stains, in which every thing revolting to the holiness of his nature is exhibited, and to exert his influence there to purify it, and render it capable of the refined and exalted joys of religion, is a proof of condescension and benevolence surpassing conception. He meets with resistance, but he does not retire ; the resistance is strong, all the power of corrupt nature being called forth to oppose his design ; but he subdues it by the same Almighty energy which reduced the elemental chaos into order. In his plastic hands, man an outcast from his Maker, so vile as to be the object of abhorrence, and so helpless as to be given over as irrecoverably lost, is transformed into a being adorned with the similitude of his Creator, devoted to his service, and destined to live in the happy seats of the spirits of light. Let us remember that we are under infinite obligations to our Sanctifier, as well as our Redeemer ; and let his love be the subject of our devout meditations, and awaken our grateful praises.

That the sanctification of the soul is the work of the Spirit we certainly know ; but the manner in which it is effected, we are not able to explain. We know also that all things were created by God, but cannot tell how he created them ; that in him we live and move and have our being, but are ignorant of the mode in which his power is exerted to sustain us. Our Lord signifies that there is something mysterious in this matter. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh

and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." * Means are employed, but their efficacy depends solely upon him. It is his power which begins and carries on the change that takes place in the sentiments and affections of the soul. We cannot call it merely a moral power, consisting in the presentation of arguments and motives to the mind, because upon this supposition, it would differ in no respect from the means themselves, or from the part which one man may act in persuading and exciting another to the love and practice of virtue. If we call it a physical power, we must mean that the soul is endowed with new faculties of perception and feeling, or that its natural faculties are rendered capable of certain acts, for which they were previously unfit. The truth is, although this term has been sometimes applied to the power exerted in regeneration and sanctification, we cannot affix any distinct idea to it ; and it is questionable whether those who use it, can explain what they mean to their own satisfaction or that of others. It would seem therefore to be the wisest and most modest plan, instead of attempting to describe the nature of this power, and the mode of exercising it, to content ourselves with the general knowledge of the fact, that it is owing to the operation of the Divine Spirit upon the soul, that it is sanctified.

A question has been agitated among divines, whether there is a formation of holy habits in the soul, or sanctification consists solely in the influence of the word upon its several faculties, upon the conscience, will, and affections, through the medium of the understanding. The controversy is somewhat obscure, and perhaps the parties have, occasionally at least, contended in the dark, as they were not always distinguished by metaphysical acumen. The point at issue seems to be, whether there is a real change effected in the soul itself, or it is only morally acted upon by the word of God, coming in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Habit commonly signifies a disposition to act, or a power of acting acquired by previous acts. In the present case it signifies merely the disposition or power without a reference to previous acts, as it is acknowledged that the power or disposition is not the effect of our prior efforts, but of a divine operation. . But if

* John iii. 8.

this is a just definition of habit, it must also be acknowledged that gracious habits are infused into the soul ; for in saying so, we mean nothing more than that the subject of sanctification possesses certain dispositions, or inclinations, to act according to the rule laid down in the Scriptures. We may not be able to understand what constitutes a disposition or habit of the mind, but the fact is certain that there are habits, intellectual and moral ; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving them to be formed by supernatural than by natural means. The great objection to the denial of habits, and the attribution of the holiness of Christians exclusively to the influence of the word, is that it represents them as not permanently but transiently holy, as having no indelible character impressed upon them, as holy only when they feel the influence of the word. This view of the matter supposes a change not in their state, but in their exercise ; for if the word were not acting upon them, they would be in all respects like other men who have never experienced its power. But it is implied in the idea of a saint, that he is possessed of holy dispositions when they are lying dormant, and all his faculties are in a state of inactivity ; and that there remains something which distinguishes him from the unregenerate, even when he has fallen into sin. It must be acknowledged that this objection to the denial of holy habits is strong ; and that, if what is called the grace of God in the heart is reduced to the direct or immediate operation of the word in exciting our faculties, it is not easy to see how a man can be a saint when he is asleep, or has his thoughts wholly engrossed by something different from religion, or is for a time under the prevailing power of temptation, like David or Peter. At the same time, there is a mode of speaking about habits which is unguarded, and has perhaps led to the opposite extreme of denying their existence, such language being used as imports that they are something distinct from the soul in which they reside ; that the grace of God is a substance within a substance, and not merely an effect produced upon the soul or its faculties. We cannot speak of spiritual things without making use of terms which primarily relate to external objects ; but some writers, from want of judgment and taste, indulging in an unnecessary grossness of language, materialize subjects,

in conceiving which the senses and the imagination can give no assistance. Discarding such phraseology, we maintain that a change is produced in the soul by the mysterious operation of the Spirit, through which it acquires an inclination to act, or a power of acting in a particular manner ; that this inclination or power is not occasional but habitual ; that it remains when it is not in exercise, as any natural disposition is in the soul although it should not be excited by the presence of its proper object ; and that there is at all times a specific difference between the renewed and the unrenewed man. “ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him.” *

The pattern according to which believers are sanctified, is the holiness of the divine nature. “ Be ye holy, for I also am holy.” “ Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” † Man was created in the image of God, and the design of sanctification is to restore him to his original state. We are like our Maker in the spiritual essence of our souls, we are like him in knowledge, we are like him in power ; that is, our rational and active nature exhibits some traces of those attributes ; but our perfection and glory consist in our resemblance to his holiness. It is to the holiness of God as manifested in Christ that believers are conformed by the agency of the Spirit ; and hence Christ may also be considered as the pattern after which believers are sanctified. I speak of him, not as the second Person of the Trinity, although in this character he is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, but as incarnate or clothed with our nature, and in it exhibiting all the graces and virtues which constitute our assimilation to God. We see in him what human nature was, when it was formed by the hand of the Creator and he looked upon it with approbation, and what it must become that it may be pleasing in his eyes, and may be admitted into his glorious presence. Christ should be contemplated in two lights, as an atonement and as an example. In the one character he has made peace between us and our offended Maker ; in the other he has shewn us what our Maker is, in respect of his moral attributes, and what he requires us to be ; how we

* 1 John iii. 9.

† 1 Pet. i. 16. Matth. v. 48.

should think, and feel, and act, so as to be imitators of God. That he is the pattern according to which those who are the subjects of divine grace are formed, is evident, from his own command to follow him; from the description of true Christians, as "having Christ dwelling in them;" from the purpose of God that all the members of his family should be conformed to the image of his Son; and from the effect of the gospel upon believers, who are changed by it into "the same image from glory to glory." He is the "first-born among many brethren," superior in dignity, and the model after which they are fashioned. We are exhorted to be "followers of the saints;" and from the contemplation of their character and conduct, we may derive much valuable instruction with respect to our duty, and powerful excitement to the performance of it. But we must not follow them implicitly, because we know that they were liable to error and infirmity, and that some of the most distinguished among them have given melancholy proofs of weakness and depravity. The Apostle Paul has pointed out the limits within which they should be imitated. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." * Thus far we tread upon sure ground; but when we can trace no correspondence between them and him, it is our duty to forsake them. In him alone we can safely confide, in whose conduct the eye of omniscience did not perceive a single flaw, and whom the voice of the Father proclaimed to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased." Let us look to him when we are "running the race set before us."

The rule of sanctification is the word of God. I mean, that this is the rule according to which the Spirit works, forming in us those dispositions which it promises or requires, and the rule according to which we should work in the whole course of our Christian profession. Those who have been emancipated from the service of sin, obey, according to an Apostle, that form of doctrine which has been delivered to them; they walk in the light of the Lord, and keep his testimonies and statutes. Without multiplying Scriptural references, it is evident to every attentive reader of the sacred writings, that the soul is sanctified by being brought under the illuminating

* 1 Cor. xi. 1.

and commanding influence of the word of God. Holiness is our conformity to what it enjoins ; and when our thoughts, volitions, and aims, our words and actions, correspond with its letter and its spirit, we are saints in its estimation. No human rule has any right to interfere with our obedience, or should be permitted to dictate to us. Men have devised a variety of observances and practices, in which they have supposed holiness to consist ; and, by punctual attention to them, have appeared to themselves and to others to have attained a high degree of sanctity. The Pharisees received with sacred respect the traditions of the elders, fasted often, gave more tithes than the law enjoined, frequently washed their hands and the vessels which they used, that they might avoid every kind of defilement. In imitation of them, many Christians have distinguished themselves by superstitious usages. They have withdrawn from human society, and spent their lives in deserts and monasteries. They have abstained from the flesh of animals, and confined themselves to a vegetable diet ; they have macerated their bodies by frequent fasts and severe penances ; they have gone on toilsome pilgrimages to visit holy places ; they have bound themselves to devote a certain portion of their time to the repetition of prayers ; they have entered into vows of poverty, celibacy, and blind obedience to their religious superiors. The professed design of these observances, was to promote the interests of piety and holiness ; but they have uniformly failed, because they were not of Divine institution. As we cannot serve God by doing what he has not commanded, and still less by doing what he has forbidden, so it is presumptuous to expect his blessing upon means which, being introduced as supplementary to his ordinances, very plainly import that, in this respect, man is wiser than he. Even when used only as auxiliaries to holiness, they must be equally ineffectual, because the communication of grace depending absolutely upon his will, there is no reason to believe that human interference, whatever may be the motive, with a matter which it is his province to regulate, will induce him to deviate from his plan, and to give countenance to the idea that we know, better than our Maker, what are the most proper expedients for our moral improvement. He who would please God and obtain his blessing, must

adhere closely to his word, "which is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify him, and enjoy him for ever."

As there is a pattern and a rule of our sanctification, so there are means appointed for carrying it on, to the consideration of which I am naturally led by the preceding observation. Those suggested by human wisdom, we have rejected; let us attend to those which God himself has ordained.

First, It is evident that, as the word of God is the rule of holiness, so it is a mean admirably adapted to promote its own design; because it not only points out and inculcates our duty, but presents many considerations calculated to work powerfully upon the will and the affections. It not only delivers naked precepts, which recommend themselves to us by our perception of their conformity to reason and truth; but it exhibits them in all the loveliness of example, in the history of the saints, and particularly in that of our Redeemer. Holiness, if I may speak so, appears in an animated form, and, displaying all its graces before us, fixes our attention, and engages our love. The idea of the ancient philosopher is realized by the incarnation of virtue; and although his prediction is not fulfilled, that all men would fall down and adore it, yet this is the effect upon those whose hearts are made, by Divine grace, to feel its attractions. The word of God holds out the greatest encouragements to the study of holiness, in the promises of Divine assistance with which it is replenished. How well calculated these are to promote the design, will be manifest to every person who has seriously reflected upon his own moral weakness, and has felt the paralyzing effect of such meditation. 'How is it possible for me,' the sinner is apt to exclaim, when he is called to purify his heart, 'how is it possible for me to cleanse myself from the pollution of sin? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may I, who am accustomed to do evil, learn to do well.' In this state of despondency, the word of God affords us relief by assurances of supernatural grace. When it says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling," it adds, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* It places before us the most interesting motives, the love of God, and

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

the love of Christ ; the invaluable benefits which have already been bestowed upon us, and the new blessings which we may expect to obtain ; the peace, the consolation, the joy, the hope with which our heavenly Father refreshes the souls, and recompenses, in this world, the services of his obedient children. In short, it displays before the eyes of the runner in the Christian race, the glorious prize which awaits him at the end of his course, the immortal crown which the righteous Judge will bestow upon him. We know, from experience, the efficacy of hope in stimulating and sustaining our exertion. The Scriptures enlist this principle of human nature in the service of religion, and exhort us to be “stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.”*

In the second place, All the other ordinances are means of sanctification. I shall take notice of these two, Prayer, and the Lord’s Supper. Prayer, besides its direct tendency to impress the mind with a sense of divine things, to heighten our reverence and esteem for the object of worship, to increase our desire for the blessings which we ask, and our abhorrence of the evils from which we implore deliverance ; prayer, besides these effects, which it is morally fitted to produce, has, for its direct object, the obtaining of the communications of grace. It consists, not only of adoration and thanksgiving, but also of petition. It is the application of a sinful creature, conscious of guilt, wants, and wretchedness, to the infinite mercy and beneficence of the Creator ; and, as it is authorized by his command, it never fails, when it is presented in the name of the Mediator, to bring down the blessing. Its effect is similar to that produced upon the face of Moses by his intercourse with God. The soul, returning from the sanctuary, shines with spiritual glory. By strength not his own, the Christian overcomes difficulties, repels temptations, and advances with a steady progress in the path of obedience : “Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.”† The connexion of the Lord’s Supper with the sanctification of the soul is equally manifest. The very emblems which

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† Heb. iv. 16.

are used, point it out as an institution adapted to the purpose of invigorating the graces of the Christian. As bread and wine furnish nutriment to the body, so the body and blood of Christ, or, in other words, his atonement and its benefits, contribute to the nourishment of the soul. While the ordinance powerfully impresses upon the mind the unspeakable love of Christ and the great evil of sin, and thus excites two principles of mighty efficacy in the purification of the soul,—gratitude to him and abhorrence of it,—it is the medium of communication between the Saviour and his faithful disciples, in whom he works anew by his Spirit, to carry on to perfection the good work which he has begun. Sitting at his table, and partaking of his bounty, they renew their baptismal vows in humble dependence upon his grace, by which only they shall be enabled to perform them. They devote themselves to his service, not from necessity, but from choice; not merely because they are bound to do so, but because they prefer him to every other master. A deep sense of what they have enjoyed, and what they have done, remains. Their faith is more confident; their love is more ardent; their resolution is more firm; their state of mind is more spiritual and heavenly. Like a way-faring man, who has rested and been refreshed at a place of entertainment, and then resumes his journey with renovated vigour, they go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in Zion. “As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” *

In the third place, The dispensations of providence are means of sanctification: “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” † The Apostle makes use of the universal term “all,” to signify that nothing is excluded, and that there is a co-operation of events to promote the spiritual interests of believers. And here we must admire the infinite wisdom and Almighty power of God, who renders subservient to his merciful designs, things which are not only considered as evil, but are evil in themselves, have a tendency to evil, and were they not controlled and regulated by his superintending care, would be productive of the most injurious

* John vi. 57.

† Rom. viii. 28.

effects upon the bodies and the souls, the present and the future well-being of his people. But, as in medical treatment, substances which are nauseous to our senses, substances which, when received into the system, cause in the first instance pain, and substances which are deleterious, are administered in such quantities and with such mixtures, that the ultimate effect is the removal of disease and the confirmation of health; so it is in the economy of Heaven. The object aimed at, is the spiritual health of the patient; and this is the result of the bitter draughts which he is compelled to swallow, and of the pain of amputation to which he is sometimes subjected. The Scriptures frequently speak of affliction as contributing to the progress of holiness: "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." * You observe the process. Affliction calls into exercise, and strengthens the graces of the Christian, and terminates in the more powerful diffusion of Divine love in the soul, in a more powerful impression of the love of God to us, or a stronger emotion of love on our part to God; by either of which our promptitude and sincerity in serving him will be increased. The sanctifying effect of affliction is pointed out in many passages of Scriptures, and it was experienced by the Psalmist, who says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned thy law." † It is the discipline which our heavenly Father administers to the members of his family, and it is so necessary and so salutary that none of them is exempted. It is a proof of his love, because his design in correcting them is, that they may be partakers of his holiness. How blessed are the fruits of sanctified affliction! They are the fruits of righteousness, and are of far greater value than the most esteemed temporal blessings. They humble the pride of the people of God, awaken their vigilance, make them feel their own weakness, create a stronger abhorrence of sin and an increasing indifference to earthly things, inspire a meek submission to the will of God, and, leading the thoughts to heaven, stir up longing desires for the peace which awaits them there, and for the pure joys

* Rom. v. 3—5.

† Ps. cxix. 67.

of religion which are earnest of its felicity. I have confined the illustration to the effects of adversity, but all the dispensations of providence, under the direction of divine wisdom and goodness, have the same tendency, and are included in that comprehensive plan of benevolence, which God is carrying on for the final happiness of the objects of his love.

These are the means which God employs in sanctifying his people; but as many who are exposed to their influence manifestly derive no benefit from them, it is evident that their efficacy does not arise from their fitness to the end, but from the operation of the Spirit. Besides the external means, there are certain exercises of the soul itself, which are subservient to the great design, and which, as they are the effects of the Spirit, may be considered as internal means by which the work is carried on. The following things are necessary to the sanctification of a sinner; that he be in a state in which he can partake of divine influences, that those influences be actually communicated to him, and that his views and feelings be such as shall make holiness the object of his choice, and carry him forward in the practice of it with delight. I shall shew you that these pre-requisites are obtained by faith, to which as a secondary cause our sanctification is ascribed.

First, By faith we are united to Christ, and thus are delivered from the curse of the law, which prevented the communications of divine grace to the soul, as we formerly showed. To those who believe, his righteousness is imputed, in consequence of which they are reconciled to God, and are the subjects of his favour. Thus the way is prepared for the restoration of his image. "Wherefore," says Paul to the Romans, "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."* Stript of figures these words signify, that, through the atonement of Christ received by faith, our connexion with the law or covenant of works is dissolved, and being united to him as our living Head, we are enabled to perform those holy duties by which God is glorified. 'The body of Christ,' is the sacrifice of his body on the cross; our 'death to the law,' is our exemption from the curse; our 'marriage to Christ,' is

* Rom. vii. 4.

our union to him, and ‘the fruit which we bring forth to God,’ is the acceptable obedience of the heart and the life.

Secondly, By faith we receive sanctifying grace from the fulness of Christ. God has constituted him the source of spiritual influences, and faith the mean by which they are derived from him. Human reason may inquire what peculiar virtue in faith has procured its appointment to this office, and may conceive that other means were better adapted to the end. To us it is sufficient to know the will of God, that his Spirit shall be given to those alone who look to his Son, and trust in him for assistance in the great work of their salvation. When the believer lives, it is Christ who lives in him. He is exhorted to “be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus,” who has said, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” † Christians are kept in a state of absolute dependence upon him, so that the good qualities which they possess, and the good actions which they perform, are more properly his than theirs. “Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” ‡

Thirdly, Faith produces a state of mind which is itself holy, and tends to the increase of holiness. The reasons and motives which the Scripture employs to promote the study of holiness, have no effect till by means of faith they make an impression upon the conscience and heart. In vain do we contemplate the perfect and attractive example of our Saviour, unless by the medium of this grace a living virtue flow from him into our souls, to transform them into his image. In particular, it is by faith that we obtain a comfortable sense of the love of God; and it is this which enlarges our hearts to run in the way of his commandments. It is the opinion of many, that nothing will so powerfully stimulate us to diligence as a state of uncertainty with respect to the issue, and that our activity would be relaxed by the confident belief that we already enjoy the favour of God. But those who think so, betray ignorance of the gospel plan of sanctification. In the economy of grace, privileges are the foundation of duty. Doubts and fears damp the ardour of the soul, and enervate

* 2 Tim. ii. 1.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ John xv. 4.

its exertions. When the mind takes such views of the character of God as create a spirit of bondage, it is disqualified for performing acceptable service to him. The temper in which we do serve him is offensive, because it is founded in disbelief of his word, and the works done under its influence must be rejected as a corrupt thing. He who obeys in the spirit of a slave, will do his duty reluctantly and tremblingly, and is incapable of the zeal, the promptitude, the strenuous efforts, which characterize the man who is born from above. Our obedience to God will not be cheerful, and uniform, and continued from year to year amidst discouragements and difficulties, unless we love him; and we cannot love him, unless we have some hope at least, that we are the objects of his love. Hence we perceive how necessary faith is, by which this hope or persuasion is attained. Never will the exercises of the Christian harmonize more fully with the will of God, never will his desire of holiness be stronger, and his efforts to make progress in it be more vigorous and successful, than when he is looking up to him as his gracious Father in Christ, contemplating the wonders of his love in redemption, and rejoicing in the present sense of his favour, and in the hope of infinite and ever-enduring blessedness in the world to come. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments." *

There are several other particulars connected with the subject of sanctification, which I would have introduced if time had permitted. I might have shewn you that the work is progressive, like the shining light which shineth more and more to the perfect day; that it is sometimes suspended, but never totally destroyed; and that it is completed at death, when the souls of believers are made perfect in holiness. I might have also pointed out its advantages, and its tendency to glorify God, and adorn our profession; but I shall leave these topics to your own meditations.

* Ps. cxix. 166.

LECTURE LXXVI.

ON GOOD WORKS.

GOOD WORKS, THE FRUITS OF REGENERATION.—MEANING OF THIS PHRASE.

—NATURE OF GOOD WORKS: NECESSARY THAT THEY SHOULD BE CONFORMABLE TO THE LAW OF GOD ; BE PERFORMED FROM RESPECT FOR HIS AUTHORITY, FROM LOVE TO HIM, AND WITH A VIEW TO HIS GLORY.

—POSSIBLE ONLY TO BELIEVERS.—GENERAL REMARKS RESPECTING THEM.

HAVING explained the privilege of sanctification, I proceed to speak of good works, which are the fruits of the change effected by divine grace in the soul. We have already seen, that they are not the condition of justification, which is obtained solely by faith, but that they are not therefore unnecessary, because there are many reasons why a believer should perform them, and many important purposes which they serve. I do not intend to resume these topics, but in this lecture shall confine myself to an illustration of their nature, and some remarks of a general kind.

The phrase, Good Works, is often understood in a sense too limited, and which gives an imperfect view of the effect of supernatural grace, and of the duty of a Christian. If you attend to the manner in which the expression is frequently used, you will find, that it comprehends only a part of the works to which "believers are created again in Christ Jesus," and that the most important part is omitted. Many seem to have no idea of any good works, but those which are enjoined by the second table of the law ; and their morality is

summed up in sobriety, justice, and benevolence, of which the principal or sole object is the temporal welfare of our brethren. The great design of Christianity, as they represent it, is to render us temperate, kind, and charitable. It is thus that the natural aversion of the heart to God discovers itself, even when it is professedly inculcating obedience to his law. The duties of which he is the immediate object are overlooked, or treated as of inferior importance. We are not surprised to find this mutilated morality taught by infidels, who are Atheists or not much different, and consider all religion towards God as superfluous and absurd ; it being their opinion that it is not by prayers, and praises, and other exercises of piety, that we are to please him, if there is such a Being and he takes any notice of our conduct, but by acting properly in the various relations subsisting between us and our brethren. But it is lamentable, that the language of Christian teachers should so often shew, that they have studied in the same school. When some of them talk of good works, we hear much of meekness, and candour, and beneficence, and the forgiveness of injuries, but little or nothing of faith, and love to God, and the dedication of the heart to him, and zeal for his glory. It is not a false charge which has been brought against such men, that they preach heathen morality ; for it is separated in a great measure from piety, and chiefly consists in the social virtues. When we speak of good works, we understand the words in the most extensive sense, as comprehending the whole duty of man, prescribed in both tables of the law ; and we remember the declaration of Him, whom alone we call our Master, that “to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, is the first and great commandment.”

I would observe farther, that there is often a very incautious way of speaking concerning the relative value of good works. They are not only contrasted with faith to the depreciation of the latter, from ignorance, it may be presumed, of what faith is, of which I know not a more notable specimen than may be found in a well known paper of the *Spectator* concerning faith and morality ;* but they are represented as the ultimate end of religion, as the terminating point of its

wonderful apparatus of contrivances and means. Thus, other important matters are thrown into the shade. Faith is undervalued; the atonement is overlooked, or regarded only as an expedient for advancing the interests of virtue; nothing is heard of but eternal and immutable morality; and so large a space does it fill in the understandings or imaginations of some men, that all other points of religion dwindle into insignificance, and they adopt the celebrated but senseless maxim, that it matters not what is our creed, if our life is orthodox. The ultimate end of religion is the glory of God in the salvation of sinners; and his glory is manifested not only by their obedience to his law, but by every part of the scheme of redemption; by the process, so far above the ideas and calculations of reason, which has reconciled his justice and mercy, and restored his lost image in the soul of man. But, although it were granted that the object to which the several steps in the plan of redemption are subservient, is the sanctification of our nature, which puts it again into a capacity to serve and enjoy its Creator, we should still object to the extravagant importance which is assigned to good works; for this reason, that by good works, those who speak of them in this manner, principally or exclusively mean the common duties of life; and were they honestly to state their sentiments, it would appear that the design of religion is accomplished, in making us good members of families, good neighbours, and good subjects of the state; not too strict and scrupulous, however, but attentive to decorum, and free from any gross and habitual vice. But all this might have been effected, without the circuitous method which has been adopted; without the death of a divine Redeemer, and the descent of the heavenly Spirit; by a plain rule of duty, and the operation of natural sentiments and affections. The design of Christianity is nobler and more extensive, namely, to make man holy in heart, as well as in life; to inspire him with the love of God; to give God the supreme place in his affections, that he may love his fellow creatures only in subordination to him, and for his sake; to establish the empire of the Divine will in his conscience, and to secure the prompt and cheerful performance of all the duties, of those which respect God, in the first place, and of those which respect man, in the second. Good

works, as commonly understood, are only a branch, and, to speak still more correctly, are only fruits, of the holiness which religion infuses into those who are subject to its influence. The design is to make all things new; to fill the mind with light, and the heart with love; to form beings on whom their Maker can look with unmixed complacency; and, when this great moral change is completed, religion may be said to have attained its end.

I now proceed to inquire into the nature of good works. Here it is proper to observe, that something is necessary to make a work good in itself; and that other things are necessary to make it good as performed by us.

That a work may be good in itself, it must be enjoined by the law of God, the sole rule of obedience. The command of man cannot make a work good, unless it be, at the same time, virtually or explicitly commanded by God: the suggestions of reason do not possess sufficient authority, because it is not our supreme guide, and is liable to error. He who created us, has alone a right to prescribe the mode in which we should exert our faculties, and fulfil the purposes of our being. We find the sinful practices of the Jews sometimes condemned, simply on the ground that they were not commanded, and without a reference to their obvious pravity. "The children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart." And God says, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."* On this ground, all those works are rejected, which are enjoined by superstition, and are supposed to possess so much merit, as to recommend the performer in a particular manner to the favour of God. The Papist undertakes pilgrimages to places fancied to be holy, submits to penances and frequent fasts, repeats appointed prayers in a given number and at stated times, and presents offerings to the church, in the full persuasion that his acts of piety are pleasing to God, and will procure a reward;

* Jer. vii. 30, 31. Mat. xv. 9.

but, as he proceeds solely upon the ground of human authority, he loses his labour, and his services are set aside by the simple question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" It is plain that duty is a relative term, and implies obligation; but the source of all moral obligation is the will of God. This is the reason why some things should be done, and other things should not be done. Our own opinion will not give goodness to our works; for, on this supposition, we should be a law to ourselves, and independent of the Sovereign of the universe: their goodness can arise solely from their conformity to the standard which the Divine authority has established.

Some moralists have maintained that the character of an action depends upon the intention of the agent, insomuch that, if a man have a good design, it will justify the means which he employs to accomplish it. This is the meaning of the celebrated maxim of certain casuists in the Church of Rome, that *the end sanctifies the means*; and practically it is adopted by others who excuse themselves, and even claim praise, when they have erred, on account of the alleged purity of their motives. It is acknowledged that an action good in itself, may become bad through intention; or in other words, it may be divested of all moral worth by being performed with an unlawful design, and the agent may be guilty of sin in the divine estimation. The giving of alms is not a virtue when it flows from ostentation; nor zeal for truth when it originates in pride and passion; nor prayer when the object is to be seen of men. But although intention may convert good into evil, it does not possess the opposite power of turning evil into good. To ascribe to it such power is to deny that there is any essential difference of actions, to render morality entirely an arbitrary thing, to represent it as continually changing its character, so that what is vicious to-day may be virtuous to-morrow, and what is vice in one man may be virtue in another, according to the views by which they are respectively influenced. It sets aside the law of God, and substitutes, in the room of a permanent standard, the ever-varying decisions of the human mind, blinded by prejudice, warped by passion, and forming its judgments upon deceitful appearances and short-sighted calculations. The only province which ought to be assigned to intention in

morality, is to give value to such actions as are conformable to the law of God, to the goodness of which it is indispensably necessary that the state of the mind be right. Men may think that they are doing God good service, but this idea will not exculpate them, if they are like the Jews, who sought to promote his glory by opposing the truth and persecuting its friends. It is sufficient to explode the doctrine of intention, to consider the extent to which it would carry us; for upon this principle many of the greatest crimes might be justified, because those who committed them imagined that they were doing their duty.

No work, therefore, is good in itself unless it be commanded. The Church of Rome teaches, that there are works of supererogation, meaning by these, works which men are not bound to perform by any positive command, and which therefore exceed the measure of their duty, and create a superfluous degree of merit that may be transferred to others for their benefit. They are not required from any man; but they are recommended by what they call *counsels of perfection*, counsels to aim at higher attainments in holiness than are necessary to our salvation. They found this doctrine upon the advice or counsel of Paul to the Corinthians, not to marry;* and particularly upon the words of our Lord to the young man, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor."† With respect to the first, it is plain that abstinence from marriage was not recommended as a higher degree of holiness, but as good "for the present distress;" that is, as a matter of prudence, because it was a time of persecution, when those who were encumbered with families would be exposed to particular inconvenience and danger; and hence it appears that it is not a counsel addressed to Christians in general. With respect to the second, it was not a counsel, but a command to an individual, of whose sincerity our Lord was pleased to make trial, by demanding the sacrifice of all his earthly possessions. The perfection of which he speaks is not a higher degree of holiness than others had attained, but the perfection of sincerity; 'if thou wilt prove thyself sincere in seeking eternal life, go and sell all that thou hast.' It is a proof of deplorable

* 1 Cor. vii.

† Matth. xix. 21.

blindness, of unaccountable stupidity, for any man to imagine that it is possible to exceed the measure of our duty; for what more can be conceived than is implied in these two commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?" This is a summary of the whole duty of man. The highest possible love to God, and the highest possible love to our neighbour, are already required; and our love to both is to be manifested in every way which Scripture and Providence may point out. Works of supererogation have no existence but in the vain imaginations of ignorant and self-righteous men. The Church of England says well in her fourteenth article, "Voluntary works, besides, over, and above God's commandments, which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and pride. For by them men do declare, that they not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required. Whereas, Christ saith plainly, 'When ye have done all that ye are commanded to do, say, We are unprofitable servants.'"

Having seen what is necessary to render an action materially, let us next inquire how it becomes formally, good. An action may be good in its own nature, and yet may be so vitiated by the state of mind in which it is performed, as to be of no value in the Divine estimation.

I observe, then, that it is requisite to the moral goodness of an action, that it be performed from respect for the authority of God. Its abstract nature is the same, when we are influenced by any other principle; but, then, it is not an act of obedience, and cannot therefore be acceptable to God, as our Lawgiver and Judge. Philosophers have inquired into the foundation of morality, and, as we might have expected, have come to different conclusions. They have told us, that it is agreeable to the fitness of things; that it is conformable to nature; that it is conformable to reason; that it is conformable to truth; that it is productive of good. But whatever theory we adopt, none of them proves any thing more than that there is a propriety, a decency, an order, an utility, in doing some things and not doing others. No

proper obligation results from any of these systems ; they do not take hold of conscience, and create the idea of duty. The Scriptures, disregarding all metaphysical speculations, go directly to the point, and lay down the only intelligible and practical foundation of morality, namely, the will of God. In reading them, you do not find that particular actions are enjoined upon the principles of philosophy, but on the stronger grounds of religion. It is the will of God, that we should do this or that ; it is his law, by which we should regulate our conduct. To do our duty, is not to satisfy the dictates of our own minds, but to express our reverence for him. Virtue is obedience, that is, conformity to the will of a superior ; and the great example proposed to us, is that of our Saviour, who came “ not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him.”

From these observations it follows, that to constitute a work formally good, it must be done, not because it will please ourselves or others, but because it is commanded by God. Hence you perceive the reason that some works, which have a specious appearance, and excite the admiration of men, are rejected by the Searcher of hearts. The true principle of obedience is wanting. While the persons are acting in literal conformity to the law, the Lawgiver is not in all their thoughts. Hence also you may see whence that persuasion is necessary, of which the Apostle speaks when he says, “ Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.”* This is not justifying faith, or faith in Christ, as has sometimes been imagined ; and hence the words have been improperly quoted, to prove that none but believers can perform works acceptable to God ; but it is an assurance in our minds, that what we are doing is right, founded upon the careful study of the law. If we should do what is lawful in itself, thinking it to be unlawful, to us it would be a sin ; if we should do it without knowing any thing respecting its nature, the best that could be said of it is, that it is neither good nor evil. Then only are our works right, when we know them to be commanded, and do them because they are commanded.

I observe once more, That to the goodness of our works, it is necessary that they flow from love to God. Love to

* Rom. xiv. 23.

him is stated to be the sum of the first table of the law ; and, although love to our neighbour is represented to be the sum of the second, yet, unless it be founded on love to God, it will not be a religious affection. It is conceivable that a man may perform a variety of duties because God has commanded them, and at the same time perform them unwillingly. Conscience may force him to act contrary to his inclinations. The principle which predominates may be fear ; under the influence of which a person will earnestly and diligently do what is necessary to ward off the danger which he dreads ; but he is only submitting to a less, in order to escape a greater evil. The works which he performs, are not his choice ; he is impelled to them by a very different principle from that of obedience. Now, although his outward actions may be strictly conformable to the standard of duty, and much benefit may result from them to others and to the cause of religion, yet their moral worth is completely destroyed by the state of his feelings. No such service from a son would be pleasing to his father ; nor would a master approve of a servant, however punctually he might execute his orders, whom he knew to be under the influence of a secret dislike to his duty. We see, then, that love to holiness is indispensably requisite. To the all-seeing eye of God the heart is manifest ; and he looks more to its movements, than to the professions of the mouth and the sanctity of the conduct. So peremptorily does he demand the heart, and so necessarily does it enter into the essence of acceptable obedience, that nothing can atone for the want of its concurrence. It is vain to think that we shall please God, while we entertain no friendly sentiments and dispositions towards him ; and these, you know, are the native fruits of love. Love is the soul of duties, and the external action is the body. It is but the half, and the inferior half, which he gives who obeys without love. This point is so plain as to stand in need of no farther illustration ; and I shall only add, that a single duty emanating from love to God, is of greater account in his estimation than the multiplied services of the hypocrite, who courts the applause of men, or is stimulated by the servile principle of fear.

Lastly, It is necessary that our works be done for the glory

of God ; for, as all things were made for him as well as by him, we do not fulfil the end of our existence, unless we constantly refer to his honour as our ultimate end. When men make *themselves* their end, when they aim at the gratification of their vanity, and the advancement of their temporal interests, or even at their eternal happiness independently of the glory of God, they serve themselves and not him. The character of actions is fixed by their motives ; and there must be an essential moral difference between actions which proceed from a regard to ourselves, and those which are influenced by a regard to our Maker. “ Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” * The doing of all things to the glory of God, is an expression of frequent occurrence, but often, perhaps, it is not distinctly understood. It suggests the idea of acting with a design to acknowledge him before our fellow-men, as a glorious Being, and to excite them to reverence, admire, and praise him ; and this unquestionably is the tendency of those good actions which are of a public nature. But, as this should be the end of all our actions, even of those which our brethren have no opportunity to observe, to do all things to the glory of God, properly signifies, to do them from love to him and respect for his authority, and is therefore virtually included in the qualifications of good works which have been already mentioned. A Christian can have no intention to display the glory of God before others in his secret devotion ; but he does give him due honour, even in his closet, by the pious emotions of his soul, by adoration, confession, and thanksgiving, by reverence and gratitude, and the exercises of faith and hope. Now, if we understand nothing more to be meant, than that we should do all things in obedience to his command, and from a profound regard to his character and perfections, we shall see that there is no occasion to agitate the question, Whether there should be, in each action, a distinct reference to his glory, or a general purpose to glorify him be sufficient ? because it will be evident, that all our actions should be performed in the spirit of religion, and that every action so performed is good. If we are not impressed at that moment with his

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

authority, and have no desire to please him, the action is no part of acceptable obedience.

It is so evident from what has been said, that good works can be performed only by such as have been translated into a state of grace, that it is unnecessary to mention it distinctly; and besides, this important point was fully considered when we were explaining the subjects of regeneration and sanctification. In man, prior to his conversion, there dwells no good thing; and the fruit will be corrupt, till the nature of the tree is changed: "We are created" in Christ Jesus unto good works;* that is, good works are the effect of the renovation of the soul by the Spirit of God. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me."†

It is an obvious inference from the preceding discussion, that works truly good can be performed only by those who believe and live under the influence of the Gospel. There is no difficulty, therefore, in determining what estimate we should form of the boasted virtues of the heathens. They have been pronounced to be *splendida peccata*; but, by many, this has been deemed a harsh and uncharitable judgment. It would be a satisfactory mode of settling the dispute, or, at least, it might make a stronger impression upon some, if, instead of dwelling on vague generalities, we would come to particulars, and, having demanded a specification of the virtues in question, should then proceed to subject them to the test of Scripture and sound reason. I believe that the imposing display which is made to pass before us, by the power of declamation and loose panegyric, would thus lose much of its splendour, and would be reduced within a narrow compass; and that certain actions, when brought near and strictly examined, would not appear in the same light as when viewed at a distance, and surrounded with the false glory which ignorant admiration and prostituted eloquence have bestowed upon them. Instead of assuming it as a fact capable of demonstration, that some of the heathens were eminently virtuous, their advocates should shew us what their virtues were; and then, I am confident, we should find that they were few in number and of a dubious character, if not altogether unworthy

* Eph. ii. 10.

† John xv. 4, 5.

of the name. It is intolerable to hear Christians giving the name of virtue to the mere exercise of the natural affections without any religious motive ; to acts of natural courage ; to patriotism, as it is commonly understood and was exemplified among the Greeks and Romans ; to a proud morality, which elated the possessors with self-conceit, and led them to claim an equality, or a superiority to the gods. If it be true, that a work is not good unless it be performed from respect for the authority of God, the works of heathens were not good ; because they could not have an intention to obey him whom they did not know, and their virtues were founded solely upon self-respect, or a sense of propriety, or views of utility. If it be true, that no work is good unless it is done with a view to please God, and from love to him, the works of the heathens were not good ; for, as a celebrated author has observed, “ before the Christian religion had, as it were, humanized the idea of the Divinity, and brought it somewhat nearer to us, there was very little said of the love of God. The followers of Plato have something of it, and only something ; the other writers of pagan antiquity, whether poets or philosophers, nothing at all.” The popular deities could not be the objects of love ; and the true God, whom some are supposed to have known, removed from common apprehension and wrapt up in the obscurity of his nature, was regarded with distant reverence, and furnished only a subject of speculation. If it be true that no work is good which is not performed for the glory of God, the works of heathens were not good ; because we are assured by an Apostle, concerning the wisest and best of them, that they did “ not glorify him ;” and we know that the great design of their virtues was to gratify their own feelings, and to gain the admiration of their countrymen. Why should it be deemed harsh to pronounce this sentence upon the virtues of the heathens, even although they had been more numerous and more perfect than they are ? What makes some men so feelingly alive to their reputation, while without scruple they accuse of hypocrisy persons around them, who are far more virtuous even than Socrates ; and, in support of this charge, are ready enough to tell us that the external appearance is of no avail, if the motives are corrupt ? It is easy to assert that the motives of heathens were pure ;

but it is as easy to prove that they were not and could not be pure, ignorant, as they were, of the true religion and destitute of the grace of God. The words of Peter to Cornelius have been often quoted, to prove that the works of heathens are pleasing to God, as well as those of Christians; but they are grossly perverted. "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him."* Any person who considers the context, will see that they do not teach that men of every nation may work righteousness, but that, to whatever nation those who work righteousness belong, they are accepted. No two things can be more different; and that the latter is the true meaning is evident, because the Apostle is speaking in reference to the prejudices of the Jews, who believed that they were the objects of the Divine favour, to the exclusion of every other people. This he now discovered to be an error; for, in the case of Cornelius God had shewn, that if there were any righteous Gentiles they also were acceptable to him. But Cornelius, let it be remembered, was not such a Gentile as Socrates, or Cato, or Aristides, but one who knew the true God, and worshipped him.

There is one qualification remaining, which may be thought necessary to the goodness of our works, namely, that they should be perfect; for it may be said, that since the law of God requires them to be perfect, any defect will change their character, and render them sins rather than duties. Now, it is acknowledged that all the works of the saints are imperfect. There is not one of them who can truly say, that he loves God with all his heart; or that, in the full sense of the expression, he loves his neighbour as himself. The flesh lusts against the spirit, and impedes its operations. The regenerated have been compared to a man lately recovered from sickness, whose motions are feeble and languid; and hence, there is something in their best works for which they might be rejected. But let it be observed, that although the works of the saints do not exactly correspond with the demands of the law, they do not labour under any essential defect. The principle is right, and the motive is right. The defect lies only in

* Acts x. 34, 35.

degree. They are not perfectly good, but still they are good. They are *so far* conformable to the requisitions of the law, but not to the full extent : they are acts of obedience to the will of the Lawgiver. The metal is not free from alloy, but it is gold. Imperfect works would be certainly rejected, if offered as the ground of justification because, in this case, a righteousness without a single flaw is the indispensable condition ; but, when viewed in another light they are approved, because there is much in them which is pleasing to God. To this should be added, that they are presented to him through the mediation of his Son. For his sake, what is evil is forgiven ; and what is good, being recommended by his merit and intercession, comes up before the throne of heaven as incense, and as the evening sacrifice.

Good works are incumbent upon the followers of Christ without distinction. From some civil duties persons of certain orders and professions are exempted, in compliment to them or from the necessity of the case ; but the authority of the law of God has no limits, and none are too high or too low to be subject to its operation : “ This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in God be careful to maintain good works ; these things are good and profitable unto men.” * It may be observed, however, that all good works are not formally incumbent upon all ; but that, while some are universally obligatory, others are binding only in particular circumstances. Works of justice, temperance, and piety, are required from all without exception, because no situation can occur in which it could be justifiable to refrain from worshipping our Maker, to indulge irregular appetite, or to defraud and injure our neighbour. But every man is not bound to give alms, because some are so poor as to be themselves the objects of charity ; and there are many duties which arise out of the relations of men to one another, and which therefore cannot be demanded from those who do not stand in such relations. He fulfils his duty, who endeavours to glorify God and to do good to men, by the faithful exertion of the powers conferred upon him and the diligent improvement of the opportunities which he enjoys, by moving in his own sphere and perform-

* Tit. iii. 8.

ing the particular service which the Master of the household has assigned to him.

Every person has it in his power to perform good works. I do not mean that he has by nature moral ability, but that he has means and opportunities. Of possible things there are some which one man can do, and another cannot; and of duties, as we have seen, some are not incumbent upon all, but are required only in particular circumstances; but there is no person, however obscure his station and limited his powers, who is under the necessity of remaining inactive. Every man may practise self-command, and every man ought to cultivate piety towards God, and charity towards his brethren. There is not an individual who is not somehow connected with others, and is not called to some relative duties. If he has nothing to bestow in the form of alms, and no influence to exert in behalf of the temporal interests of his brethren, he can give them his good offices and good counsels; and these are comprehended under the denomination of good works as well as more substantial deeds, for what we speak, as well as what we do, falls under the prescription of the law, and God is glorified both by our words and by our actions. Where is the man who may not speak a word in commendation of religion, or for the instruction and consolation of his acquaintance and strangers? It is surely a good work to communicate knowledge to the ignorant, to silence the gainsayer, to reclaim the backslider, to warn the tempted, to cheer the melancholy, and to encourage the dying. If a man were living in a solitude, he might still perform acceptable works; for he could there mortify his appetites and passions, improve his graces, carry on his necessary labours in the spirit of religion, meditate plans for the good of his fellow-men if he should ever again mix with society, and make the desert resound with the voice of prayer and praise.

This leads me to remark, that there are many good works existing in their first principles which are never brought to perfection, but which the eye of God beholds with approbation. Such are the benevolent purposes and pious wishes of the saints, springing from love to God and to man, which are not matured from the want of circumstances favourable to their developement and growth. As there is much evil which

never assumes a sensible form, so there is much good which never attracts human observation. But He sees it who searches the heart, and as in some cases he has taken public notice of it in his word, so we may believe that it will be made known in the day when all secrets shall be revealed, as no small part of the goodness by which his people will then be distinguished. "The Lord said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart." * Good intentions, although they should fail to accomplish their object, are not lost. They are treasured up in heaven, and will receive their reward. "If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." †

There are two extremes with respect to good works, into which men have been betrayed through the perverseness of their hearts, and ignorance of the truth. Some have ascribed merit to them, and represented them as the procuring cause of justification and eternal life; and others, totally mistaking the design of those passages which declare them to be useless for a particular purpose, have rejected them as altogether unnecessary, and pronounced it to be dangerous to inculcate them. In the days of the Apostle James there were persons of this description, who trusted in an unproductive faith; and even our own age has given birth to Antinomian teachers, who, in their injudicious zeal against those who oppose the law to grace, exalt grace upon the ruins of the law. These men give great countenance to the objection against justification by faith, that it weakens the obligations to holiness, and supersedes the necessity of it. They are appealed to as living proofs that the objection is true. But we have formerly seen that there is no foundation for it in the doctrine when scripturally stated.

Antinomianism is indignantly exploded by all the enlightened friends of the gospel, and their due place is assigned to good works in the system of religion. But it seems to have tainted the minds of not a few who in words disavow it, as we may infer from the suspicion or dislike with which they view expositions of moral duties, and the desire which they

* 2 Chron. vi. 8.

† 2 Cor. viii. 12.

discover to be always entertained with discourses on the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. The time was, when the minister who explained and enforced relative duties in detail was heard with a jealous ear, and was in danger of being assailed with the accusation of legalism. This unfounded prejudice, I believe, is passing away; but it still retains its influence upon the weak and ignorant. Good works should always be inculcated upon Christian principles; and when they are placed upon a proper foundation, and enjoined for the ends which the Scriptures point out, they are an important and necessary part of public instruction. Ministers should “affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.”* This is the command of Paul, and he does not act in his spirit, who, intimidated by popular clamour, always insists on doctrinal topics. In this case he pleases not God but man. The ignorance which finds fault with him is entitled to no respect, and if the censure is dictated, as in some cases we have reason to suspect, by a worse principle,—the disinclination of the human heart to holiness, and the presumptuous hope of salvation without it,—it should be treated with the contempt which it deserves. When men would separate what Christ has joined together, and set one part of his religion in opposition to another, the audacious attempt should rouse the holy zeal of all the friends and defenders of the truth. By the same authority which explodes or throws into the shade one part of the system, the other may be subjected to the same dishonourable usage. If one class of men demand faith to the exclusion of works, another may as reasonably demand works to the exclusion of faith. He is a wise steward, who arranges every thing in its proper place, and brings it forth in its order and season. He is a faithful minister, who inquires not what are the fancies and tastes of his audience, but what is the truth; and regardless of human censure or applause, fearlessly teaches men “to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them.”

It has been sometimes said, that it is unnecessary to be particular in inculcating good works, because if men are brought to believe in Christ, obedience will certainly follow. This sage remark supposes that divine grace operates upon believers,

* Tit. iii. 8.

not agreeably to their rational nature, by instruction, exhortation, and admonition, but instinctively, and contrary to the plan which is actually adopted in the dispensation of religion, where there is an ample provision of means for promoting the sanctification of the soul ; and what is more, it represents those parts of Scripture as useless in which duties are detailed and enforced, our Lord as having spent his strength in vain while he was preaching his sermon on the mount, and the Apostles as having filled up with moral lessons a considerable space in their Epistles, which would have been more usefully occupied with doctrinal discussions. The opinion which leads to such conclusions is worse than absurd.

LECTURE LXXVII.

ON CONSCIENCE.

CONNEXION OF THIS SUBJECT WITH THE PRECEDING LECTURES.—NATURE OF CONSCIENCE.—ITS OFFICE.—ITS FALLIBILITY.—THE RULE OF CONSCIENCE, THE WILL OF GOD.—THE SCRIPTURES THE ONLY RULE TO BELIEVERS.—THEIR ADEQUACY AND SUPREMACY AS SUCH.—AUTHORITY OF AN ERRING CONSCIENCE.—GOD ALONE THE LORD OF CONSCIENCE.

HAVING finished what I intended to say on the three great privileges of believers in Christ, justification, adoption, and sanctification, I deem this the proper place to introduce some observations upon Conscience, which is intimately connected with those privileges. Two things are necessary with regard to it: that it should be freed from a sense of guilt, which is the cause of great disquietude and alarm; and that it should be purified from the errors and corruptions by which its right exercise is impeded. The first effect is produced in justification, when the sinner is pardoned, and, through faith, is filled with peace and joy; the second is the work of sanctification, in which the illumination of the mind, and the mortification of unholy appetites and passions, give it new ability and new liberty to execute its functions with fidelity.

Let us begin with inquiring into the import of the term. Conscience is the Latin word in an English form, and *conscientia* is a literal translation of the Greek word *συνειδήσις*. Both terms evidently import something more than simple knowledge, which would have been expressed by *scientia* and *εἰδησις*. Compounded as they are with prepositions which signify *with*, they suggest the idea of conjunct knowledge;

and this has been explained in various ways. This power, say some, is called conscience, because it conjoins knowledge with knowledge, universal knowledge, namely, of the law, with particular knowledge, namely, of the fact, by applying the one to the other. Thus, after a man has done a certain action, he reasons in the following manner: ‘I know that such an action is forbidden by the law of God; I know that I have done this action, and therefore I have committed a sin.’ This process is an operation of conscience; and it consists in bringing together our knowledge of the law and our knowledge of our own conduct. Others explain the matter, or at least express it, somewhat differently, calling conscience the knowledge which a man has with himself as with another; by which they mean, I presume,—for their language is awkward and obscure,—that conscience consists in the knowledge of our actions, and a comparison of them with the standard of duty in our own minds. Another mode of explaining the term, is to consider the conjunct knowledge of which it is expressive, as referring to the knowledge of men and the knowledge of God, and intimating that both are employed about our actions. While we know, God knows them; and of this important fact it is the office of conscience to remind us. There are two witnesses of every thing we do, our own consciousness, and the Great Being in whose presence we always are.

Conscience ought not to be confounded with consciousness. The latter term denotes our knowledge of what is passing in our minds, and does not relate to external things. I am conscious of my own existence, but am not conscious of the existence of any other person, however firmly I may believe it. Conscience is conversant not only with what is passing in our minds, but also with our external actions; with our thoughts and actions which are past, as well as with those which are present; and with the actions of other men, so far as they are the subject of moral judgment. It is different also from the understanding, the province of which is to acquire the knowledge of the nature, and qualities, and relations of objects, and to pronounce what is proposed to it to be true or false, by means of its intuitive perceptions, or by a process of reasoning; while the objects of conscience are

more limited in number, and present themselves under a different aspect. They are considered, not as true or false, but as good or evil, morally good and morally evil.

Among Scholastic Divines, and some more modern authors who have transplanted their barbarous terms and distinctions into their writings, it has been a subject of discussion, whether conscience is an act, a habit, or a faculty. If I apprehend the meaning rightly, those who call it only an act, deny that conscience is a distinct power of the mind, and conceive it to be merely an occasional application of our knowledge of right and wrong to our actions. Those who call it a habit, seem to hold that it is not natural to men, but is the effect of instruction and discipline. Conscience, they say, is knowledge, and knowledge is a habit, or something acquired; thus confounding the improvement of a faculty with the faculty itself. If, because our knowledge of right and wrong is acquired by education and reflection, it follows that conscience is not an original principle of our nature, it would be easy to prove, by the same kind of reasoning, that there is no such original principle as intellect. Some attempt to evade this difficulty, by distinguishing habits into innate and acquired, and telling you that conscience is something between these, and partakes of the nature of both; and then ending with such an explanation as, if it have any meaning, amounts to this, that after all, conscience is a faculty, although they choose to call it a habit. Such is the useless trash, under the name of Logic or Metaphysics, with which many theological volumes are filled.

It has been disputed, among men of more correct and luminous modes of thinking, whether conscience should be considered as a distinct faculty of the mind; or merely as the exercise of its other faculties upon a particular subject, and in a particular form. Conscience has been pronounced to be an operation of the judgment, comparing one thing with another,—our actions with the standard of duty,—and pronouncing their agreement or disagreement. But there is no reason for excessive simplification. We have only to go a step farther, and deny that the soul has any distinct faculties, and that what we call such, are only different modes in which it exerts itself; but, although this were true, it would

serve no purpose but to introduce a change in human language, and to set aside as useless many of the speculations of philosophy. If we say that the soul has understanding, because it is capable of knowledge ; that it has judgment, because it compares ; that it has will, because it chooses and refuses ; there seems to be no reason why we should not say also, that it has conscience, because it distinguishes right and wrong, and approves or disapproves of our actions. There seems to be a particular reason why we should account it something more than an operation of the understanding, namely, that there is not a simple perception of agreement and disagreement between the standard of duty and our actions, but an approbation or disapprobation of them, with an anticipation, pleasant or painful, of the consequences. By philosophers, it has been sometimes called the moral sense. They have given it the designation of a sense, to signify that it perceives right and wrong, as the taste perceives sweet and bitter ; and of moral sense, to specify the objects about which it is conversant. But, although the term, sense, is sometimes applied to our internal feelings, yet I look upon the phrase, moral sense, as an incongruous combination of terms, and prefer conscience, not only because it occurs in the Scriptures, and is adopted by theologians, but because it is free from ambiguity, and, from association at least, reminds us of an authoritative rule of action, and of a supreme Judge ; while the moral sense implies a reference to neither. Besides, to call conscience a sense, implies, that we have instinctive moral perceptions ; a supposition which does not accord with experience, and proceeds upon the gratuitous assumption, that this faculty is different from all our other mental faculties, which remain in a dormant state till they are excited, and require culture to fit them for the performance of their functions.

It has been objected against considering conscience as an original power of the mind, not only that it seems to be wanting in some individuals, but that its operations are not uniform. What is esteemed virtuous at one time, becomes vicious at another, and conscience is found to pronounce opposite sentences upon the same action. What the ancient Greeks, for example, practised without shame, is now held in universal abhorrence ; and, even in modern times, if you

only pass a river, a mountain, or an imaginary line, you shall find different ideas of morality prevailing upon the one side and the other. Hence, conscience appears to be a factitious thing; the result, not of the constitution of our nature, but of education and custom. Having been taught to look upon one action as criminal, we refrain from it, and upon another as good, we practise it; but a different training would have inverted our ideas, and made us regard the former as laudable or harmless, and the latter as infamous or unbecoming. But this reasoning against the existence of a moral principle, is more specious than solid, and might be employed with equal success to disprove any other of our mental faculties. Might it not be shewn in the same way, that we have not the power of perceiving truth, because some individuals are born idiots, and men in all ages have been subject to the strangest illusions, and have embraced innumerable errors; and what has been admitted as unquestionably true at one time, has been rejected as manifestly false at another. Did we mean by conscience, an instinctive perception of the moral qualities of actions, it would be a conclusive argument against it, that men's perceptions have been so various and contradictory; but as we mean only a power in the human mind of perceiving them, the modifications to which it is subject from external circumstances, will not appear to any sound reasoner to be a proof of its non-existence.

I have not given a formal definition of conscience; but from the preceding observations, you will perceive what I understand by it. It is that faculty which perceives right and wrong in actions, approves or disapproves of them, anticipates their consequences under the moral administration of God, and is thus the cause of peace or disquietude of mind.

A question has been proposed, whether it is possible for conscience to err; and, although it seems to be a plain one, yet it has not received a uniform answer. Some have adopted the negative, affirming that conscience cannot err. They distinguish between a judgment of the mind, and a judgment of conscience, and say, that the former may be false, but that the latter is always true; not reflecting that, if conscience has any connexion with the understanding, as it must have if it is founded on knowledge, it must be subject to the same errors

with the understanding. To support their opinion, they define conscience to be a clear and certain knowledge of the objects with which it is conversant. Now, there is no doubt that, if this definition is admitted, the inference which they draw from it is undeniable; for it is manifest, that if our conceptions of any subject are distinct and adequate, our judgments concerning it must be conformable to truth. The amount, therefore, of what they say, is, that we cannot be mistaken when we are certainly right; but, for this profound discovery, no man, I presume, will think himself obliged to its authors. We may affirm any thing of any thing, if we are allowed to give an arbitrary definition of it. And this definition of conscience is undoubtedly arbitrary; for conscience, so far as it implies knowledge, is not perfect and infallible knowledge, but that degree of it which we have obtained by the exercise of our intellectual faculties, and with which many errors may be blended.

But some maintain the infallibility of conscience upon a different ground. If conscience may err, they say, it follows that God has deceived us; for he gave us this faculty, and it is his candle shining within us. If God had given conscience as the only rule of our conduct, if he had commanded us to rely with implicit confidence upon its dictates, and if it were still as perfect as it ever was, we might say that the errors into which we are led by it are imputable to its Author. But not one of these pre-requisites is true. Conscience is not our only rule, as we shall afterwards see; its dictates are not therefore to be implicitly obeyed, and it has not continued uninjured amidst the ruin of our moral nature. Conscience, which derives all its light from the understanding, must receive it, if I may speak so, obscured and discoloured as it flows from its source. Does any man say, that, when our understandings err, God has deceived us? No; and let no man say that he has deceived us when conscience errs; for, what is conscience but the application of the knowledge of the understanding to our practice, as a test to examine it? By what law was God bound to preserve conscience from being tainted by sin, any more than our other faculties? It was, indeed, impossible to have preserved it in purity, when the understanding, upon which it depends, was perverted and

blinded. It is inconceivable how this notion of the infallibility of conscience could have been adopted by any man who had read his Bible, had reflected upon his own experience, had observed the conduct of others, and, in a word, was possessed of an ordinary portion of common sense. Such is a specimen of the absurd opinions which Theologians of great name have sometimes advanced. As they come in our way, we must take notice of them; but in doing so, there is a waste of precious time.

Let us now proceed to the rules of conscience. It is evident that conscience is not a rule to itself. Man comes into the world entirely destitute of knowledge, and gradually acquires it as his faculties expand; but in his state of greatest improvement, he is too ignorant of God and himself to be qualified to be his own guide. It is not enough that his intention is good. If he had been created without power to distinguish between right and wrong, or had been left without the means of ascertaining his duty, there might have appeared to be a reason for saying, that to mean well would be sufficient to recommend him to his Maker. But, since there are moral distinctions, and the knowledge of them is confessedly not beyond the reach of the human faculties, it is not to be imagined that our conduct can be acceptable to God, unless it be conformable to them. Those distinctions are founded in the nature of things, or in the will of the Creator, and must therefore be a law to all reasonable creatures. To suppose the intention to sanctify our actions, is to suppose that virtue and vice are not essentially different; that actions themselves are nothing in a moral estimate, and that the only thing to be considered is the motive or the end. Thus man would, indeed, be a law to himself, and would be accountable only for his designs; every other thing would be exempt from the Divine jurisdiction. Conscience, then, must have a rule. It is plain that the rule is not the example of others, although wise and good, because the best of men are imperfect, and are liable to errors and infirmities; because, even their virtuous actions are not to be imitated, unless we be in similar circumstances, and in the application great mistakes may be committed; and because, without another rule, we could not know whether they were right or wrong. It is implied in the

proposal to imitate them, that their actions are good ; and this supposition further implies, that there is a standard to which they are conformable. Thus we are led, at the second step beyond them, to that standard as the rule ; and exhortations to imitate them, whether delivered in the Scriptures, or by our fellow-men, can only be understood as a call to do what they have done, when we know it to be right from some other source.

I may add, that the opinion of men is not the rule of conscience, any more than their example, because they may mislead us, either from design or from their own previous error. Hence we are commanded to call no man master, and to give this honour to Christ alone ; and it is said in reference to the dogmas and commands of men, "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." * In the Church of Rome, the doctrine of probability is maintained, or the doctrine that a man may safely do any thing for which there is a probable reason. And how is this probability to be obtained ? Not by searching the Scriptures, but by consulting the Doctors ; and if a few of them concur in sentiment, nay, if even one of them pronounce that a thing may be safely done, the person whom he advises may do it, whatever it is, without incurring guilt. Thus the whole law of God has been disannulled, and a sanction has been given to every abomination ; for Doctors have been found in that Church, who have patronised by their authority every conceivable vice. This is an extreme case ; but it shews us the danger of submitting to be guided by the opinions of men. As they and we are subject to the same standard of duty, their opinions can be considered only as their interpretations of the law, which are not authoritative, and ought to be compared with the law itself before they are received.

Casuistical writers distinguish the rules of conscience into two classes. The first is the original, supreme, and independent rule, namely, the will of God, by whatever means it is made known to us. The second class comprehends the laws of men, and our own voluntary engagements, as vows, oaths, promises, and covenants. Now, there is no doubt that a man

* Isa. viii. 20.

is bound in conscience to fulfil the engagements into which he has entered to God, and to his fellow-men; that they lay him under an obligation which he cannot violate without guilt, it being always presupposed that they are lawful, and that they constitute rules by which his conduct should be regulated. It is equally certain that we are subject to the authority of others, as parents, masters, and magistrates, whose commands we ought to obey; and their commands may be called rules of conscience, as by them different classes of relative duties are pointed out and enjoined; yet they are only subordinate rules, and in fact are no rules at all, if we understand by a rule, a regulation possessing intrinsic authority. Whatever *power* our superiors may have to enforce obedience, conscience duly enlightened does not recognize their *authority*, unless it perceive an agreement between their commands and the law of God. In truth, the commands of our superiors stand in the same relation to conscience, in which the sentences of inferior magistrates stand to the subjects of a state. The latter have no authority in themselves, and all their authority is derived from the law of the land; insomuch that, if they are not conformable to it, they may be treated with contempt, and the magistrate would be punished if he should proceed to enforce them. The power of our superiors over us is founded in the law of God, made known by the light of nature or by revelation; their commands are binding only when that law gives them its sanction; and even our own engagements are not obligatory unless they accord with it, for a promise, a covenant, an oath, a vow to do what is sinful, is in itself null and void, and guilt will be incurred, not by violating, but by performing it. It follows that the moral obligation of our own engagements, and the moral obligation of the commands of our superiors, are resolvable into the will of God. Here, as in the former cases, our reasoning ends; and therefore, in strict language, his will is the only rule. There is danger in assigning this office to the commands of men, however much we may qualify it. The ignorant and the careless may be led to ascribe more to human authority than its due; and if they should not go so far as to maintain, with the infidel philosopher,* that virtue and vice are created by the

* Hobbes.

will of the civil magistrate, may however imagine that rulers in church and state have the power of dictating to conscience, of subjecting our civil and religious liberty to restraints to which it would be sinful to refuse to submit, and of making things indifferent, to be duties as sacred as the most express injunctions of the divine law. The Apostle Paul, when giving direction to Christians with respect to their civil duties, calls upon them to be subject to their rulers, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” But does he mean to insinuate that any new obligation upon conscience arises from their commands? No; his own reasoning shews that the obligation results entirely from the authority of God. “Wherefore ye must needs be subject,” that is, as stated in the preceding verse, because “he is the minister of God;” and he thus expresses himself in the beginning of the chapter. “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.”* Magistrates, being armed with the power of the state, may compel their subjects either to do what they please, or to suffer; but their moral power is derived from, and limited by the law of God; and it is only when they are considered as acting by his authority, that conscience calls upon us to obey them.

It appears, then, that the rule of conscience is the will of God, or his command which prescribes our duty. This will is the rule of obedience to all intelligent creatures; it is the rule to angels, as we learn from these words of the Psalmist, “Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.”† It was the rule to our Saviour when he sojourned among men. “My meat,” he said, “is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”‡ To the rule which directs angels, and directed our Redeemer, it is right that we should conform. This will of God is wise and just, and there would be impiety in supposing that there could be any obliquity or irregularity in the conduct which it prescribes. As it is wise and righteous, so it is good and beneficent, always aiming at our welfare, as well as the glory of our Maker; for the tendency of all the commands which it issues is to promote the order and happiness of the universe. It is the will of the

* Rom. xiii. 1, 4, 5.

† Ps. ciii. 20.

‡ John iv. 34.

Creator, to which creatures should bow with profound reverence. It is the will of a Master, whom his servants ought to obey. It is the will of a Father, which his children should regard not only with respect, but with gratitude.

The will of God is known by the light of nature. Some notions of morality are found among those who do not enjoy the advantages of revelation; and these are accompanied with a sense of obligation, that is, there is a conviction in the minds of men that they ought to do some things, and ought not to do other things. There remain treatises on morals drawn up by the Greeks and Romans, in perusing which, while we observe many defects, we cannot but admire the progress which they had made in the investigation of the various classes of relative duties. It is evident too, that conscience performed its office among them, not only from particular instances of its power in disquieting and alarming certain distinguished transgressors, but from express references to it, and their recorded declarations, that some actions were pleasing, and others were offensive to the Gods. *Mens sibi conscia recti*, was a good conscience, and *convictus conscientia*, was a man condemned by his own mind. This is expressed by the Apostle Paul in the following words: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."*

To Christians the rule of conscience is the word of God, in which his will is fully and clearly expressed. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," and is able to make us "perfect, and thoroughly to furnish us for every good work."† To those who enjoy it, reason is only necessary to enable them to understand the propositions contained in it, to collect together the precepts which are scattered here and there, and to apply them to the various cases which occur in the progress of life. Sometimes the Scriptures enter into detail; but had they attempted to point out all the minutiae of duty, they would

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

have swelled to such a size as would have defeated their design, because few could have found leisure to peruse them, and still fewer would have been accurately acquainted with their multifarious contents. In studying them, therefore, with a view to the direction of conscience, it is necessary to attend to such particulars as the following. They sometimes content themselves with laying down principles, and leave it to us to deduce the consequences. They forbid the species, in forbidding the genus under which it is included. Thus, when they condemn injustice in general, they condemn its endless modifications. At other times, by condemning one species, they condemn all the other species which are comprehended under the same genus. The prohibition of adultery in the seventh commandment, extends to every kind of uncleanness. When an external action is commanded or forbidden, the law is applicable to the disposition or principle from which it proceeds. When alms are enjoined, charity or love to our neighbour is required; and hatred is prohibited when it is said, "Thou shalt not kill." When a duty is prescribed, the means of performing it are also prescribed; and when a sin is forbidden, every thing leading to that sin is also forbidden. In a word, when the Scriptures condemn a particular vice, they recommend the opposite virtue; and *vice versa*, when they recommend a particular virtue, they condemn the opposite vice. Thus, there is no sin which the word of God does not condemn, and no duty which it does not enjoin, in one or other of these ways. There are, indeed, few sins or duties which it does not specify with more or less particularity, by express precepts, by threatenings, by promises, by exhortations, by commendations, or by examples. It is therefore a perfect rule. There are no deficiencies which the doctrines and commandments of men might supply. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey

comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." *

After this account of the Scriptures, the general truth of which has not been disputed among Protestants, you will be surprised to be told that they are not an adequate rule of conscience. So Bishop Sanderson asserts, in his celebrated treatise *De Obligatione Conscientiæ*; and I know not how many others. The word, adequate, signifies in English, and in Latin from which it is derived, *equal, proportioned*, and conveys the idea of something fully adapted to its end. It therefore sounds strangely in our ears to affirm, that the Scriptures are not an adequate rule, and we are curious to learn the reasons. The first is, that an adequate rule supercedes the necessity of any other; but there is another rule, namely, the light of nature, which is a law to the heathens. According to this wonderful reasoning, no system of rules, however perfect, can be adequate to direct us in practising an art, if there should happen to be another system, although greatly inferior to it. Perhaps this writer affixed a new and unusual meaning to the term, or rather, he seems to have confounded two words which are totally distinct,—*only* and *adequate*. It is not true that the Scriptures are the *only* rule of conscience, because those "who have not the written law, are a law to themselves;" but it is true that they are an *adequate* rule, because they contain a perfect revelation of the will of God respecting our duty. Another reason is taken from the design of the Scriptures, which is to make us wise unto salvation; to direct us to spiritual ends; to excite us to perform those things which nature dictates, from the higher principles of love to God, and faith in Christ; whereas the office of conscience, it is said, is to consider actions, not as spiritual, but as moral; and to inquire, not whether they are performed from charity, and to a spiritual end, but whether they are good or evil, lawful or unlawful. From the latter part of this argument, it would appear that conscience has to do with our actions, but not with our motives, than which nothing is more manifestly false; and the former part of it, although brought forward with an opposite design, actually proves that the Scriptures are an adequate rule, because they

* Ps. xix. 7—11.

carry morality to the greatest possible perfection. It is unnecessary to attend to his other reasons, as you are, I presume, satisfied with the specimen which you have heard. It will naturally occur to you, that there must have been some cause which led a man esteemed wise and learned, to argue so inconclusively; and he has not been at pains to conceal it. If the Scriptures are the adequate rule of conscience, it will follow, that nothing is binding upon conscience which is not expressly or virtually enjoined in them. But this limitation would not have answered the purposes of his Church, which claims authority to decree rites and ceremonies in religion. If the Scriptures are an adequate, and consequently the only rule of conscience to those who enjoy them, these decrees will not be binding; but, if you can contrive to shew that the Scriptures are sufficient only for certain ends, and that there are other things for which a different rule is wanted, you may succeed in subjecting Christians to the doctrines and commandments of men. Thus even great men, under the influence of prejudice and self-interest, do not regulate their opinions by the Scriptures, but pervert and misrepresent them to favour their opinions. And thus, even among Protestants there remains not a little of the spirit of Popery; for the steps which make way for the admission of the authority of the Church to enjoin any thing as necessary in religion, which God has not commanded, led by degrees to the establishment of the antichristian system, under which the traditions of the fathers, the decrees of councils, and the bulls of the Popes, were exalted to a level with the commands of Christ and his Apostles.

The word of God is a rule, and, to speak properly, the only rule of conscience to Christians; other rules, which are obligatory, deriving all their authority from it. To this rule we are bound to yield unhesitating obedience; and when we comply with its duties, we do what is acceptable to God. But here a question arises, Whether the commands of conscience are binding, not only when it is enlightened by the Scriptures, but when it errs, and calls good evil, and evil good? This point requires to be treated with great caution; but, however strange it may at first appear, we do not see how we can come to any other conclusion but this, that men

ought to act according to its dictates at all times, when there is no doubt or suspense in their minds; if the case is not clear, it is evident that they should wait till, by the due use of means, they have ascertained what is their duty. If conscience should pronounce any thing to be a sin which is not a sin, they ought to abstain, because they do not know the judgment to be erroneous, and would not be guiltless if they should act in opposition to it. The reason is, that supposing, as they do, the voice of conscience to be the voice of God, they could not transgress its orders, without expressly rebelling against what appeared to them to be the authority of God. "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean."* The Apostle is speaking of an action which was not sinful in itself, and yet he declares that it was sinful to the man whose conscience pronounced it to be such. The judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, but it changes them to us; because the authority of God seems to us to be interposed either to command or to forbid. In the case to which Paul referred, the sin did not consist properly in the action itself, but in doing it in the persuasion that it was sinful. The judgment of conscience may be false, but we think it true; and in disregarding it, we disregard the Lord of conscience.

The observation, that the judgment of conscience does not change the nature of actions, paves the way for the resolution of the question, whether the general obligation to obey the dictates of conscience, will exculpate us, when the action which conscience enjoins is in itself unlawful. Conscience, let it be remembered, is only a subordinate rule, to which we are properly under a moral obligation to yield obedience, only when it is conformable to the supreme rule; and the obligation of which we speak, results solely from the supposition of its conformity. It is not, as has been said, *regula regulans*, but *regula regulata*. An appeal may be always made from its decisions to the word of God; and as soon as a difference is discovered between its dictates and those of Scripture, the sentence which it has pronounced is made void. Hence it is plain, that the plea of conscience will not avail to exempt

* Rom. xiv. 14.

us from guilt and punishment. And this, we may observe, is the unhappy situation of those whose consciences are not duly enlightened, that they sin whatever they do, in disregarding the voice of conscience and in obeying it; a consideration which should excite every man to use the greatest diligence to ascertain what is his duty, and to pray for the Divine Spirit, who is promised to lead us into all the truth. If I have made use of the word, obligation, in the present case, from the remarks connected with it there is no danger of mistaking its import. It does not, and cannot mean, that an erring conscience will justify us in doing what is morally wrong. The law of God is immutable. Our views of it may be incorrect; but no man would suppose, in any similar case, that misapprehension of the law could exempt a transgressor from the penalty. Paul, before his conversion, "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus," being persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and his disciples were apostates from the true religion. What he did, he did from conscience; yet he declares that he was "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person," who needed forgiveness, and was pardoned only through the mercy of God.*

There are persons to whom what has now been said would appear highly objectionable. What! they would ask, should a man act according to the dictates of an erring conscience? No; he ought to disobey it, and to regulate his conduct by the law of God. There are, however, some sayings which have an imposing sound, but when they come to be examined, are found to have little or no meaning, and this, I apprehend, is one of them. Those who have it most frequently in their mouths, it is to be presumed have never considered it. If they have any meaning, which is questionable, it must be this, that, if a man knows that his conscience is in an error, he ought not to obey it. But here they have no antagonists, and the case supposed is impossible, because, as soon as the error is discovered, it is corrected. To suppose a man's conscience to prescribe to him any action, after he knows it to be wrong, is absurd. What else do they mean? Is it that a man ought not to obey his conscience, although he believes

* Acts xxvi. 9.

† 1 Tim. i. 13.

its dictates to be right? What is this, but entirely to subvert its authority? No; they will reply, we only assert that it should not be obeyed when it is contrary to the law of God. But, in the mean time, we are persuaded that it is agreeable to the law, and yet are told that we should pay no respect to its commands. We entertain no doubt, and yet should refrain from acting. We believe that God is speaking to us, but should sit still and fold our hands, because, in reality, he is not speaking, and we have mistaken another voice for his. But if this reasoning, which is in reality devoid of meaning, be admitted, I am at a loss to conceive in what case we should obey conscience, for we never can be more sure of our duty than we at present are, although we may be sure on better grounds. The conviction, however, is the same, and must therefore either bind, or leave us at liberty in both cases.

Upon the whole, it appears that "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in every thing contrary to his word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship."* Such is the doctrine of our Confession of Faith, and of sound reason, for nothing can be sin or duty, with which alone conscience is concerned, but what is such in virtue of the law of the moral Governor of the universe. It may be questioned, whether the Confession is consistent with itself, when it ascribes to the civil magistrate a power "to call to account, and proceed against those who publish opinions contrary to the known principles of Christianity,"† and "to take order that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God be duly settled, administered, and observed."‡ These passages would require an ample commentary; but, in the close of this lecture, I have only time to remark, that a power is given to the magistrate to restrain and punish not only crimes against the peace of society, but opinions contrary to the truth, that is, to what he conceives to be the truth. What then can be plainer, than that he is constituted Lord of the consciences of his subjects? It belongs to him to tell them what they should believe and profess. If it be said that he is to exercise this power according to the

* Conf. chap. xx. §. 2. † Ib. §. 4. ‡ Ib. chap. xxiii. §. 3.

word of God, I answer, that it is according to the word interpreted by himself and his advisers; and consequently, their dogmas are the rule of our faith. If it be said again, that he does not interfere with conscience itself, but with our profession and practice, I answer, in the first place, that he cannot interfere directly with conscience itself, which, being an internal principle, is beyond his reach, and we owe him no thanks for not doing what is impossible; and, in the second place, that, to interfere with our profession is to interfere with conscience, because conscience calls us to avow what we believe to be true, and to act conformably to it; and this he will not allow. Such is a specimen of the shuffling methods by which it has been attempted to defend the Confession of Faith against the charge of contradicting itself, and taking away with the one hand what it has given with the other. I must add, however, that while the Church of Scotland holds the Confession, without explanation, the Church to which we belong has cleared herself from this inconsistency, by expunging from her creed every expression which imports the power of using compulsory measures in religion. We can honestly maintain, that God alone is Lord of the conscience, while we hold that our faith, and worship, and obedience, are to be regulated, not by the decrees of councils, and the edicts of magistrates, but by the supreme and infallible standard of Scripture.

LECTURE LXXVIII.

ON CONSCIENCE ; PEACE OF CONSCIENCE ; AND SPIRITUAL JOY.

DIFFERENT STATES IN WHICH CONSCIENCE MAY EXIST.—PEACE OF CONSCIENCE, DISTINGUISHED FROM MERE SECURITY, FOUNDED ON JUSTIFICATION, AND PROPORTIONED TO THE GROWTH OF SANCTIFICATION.—SPIRITUAL JOY : ITS SOURCES ; MEANS OF SECURING IT.

My remarks upon conscience have extended farther than I expected, and I am therefore under the necessity of resuming the subject in this lecture, as there are several things not yet noticed, which are worthy of attention. Conscience is essentially the same in all men ; but, like our other faculties, it exists in different states, and under a variety of modifications. I shall proceed to point out the distinctions which are commonly mentioned.

First, Conscience is distinguished into antecedent and consequent. Antecedent conscience is this faculty exercising its office in reference to actions to be performed, and pronouncing them to be lawful or unlawful. In this view, it is called a light within us, a law engraven on the heart, an impression made by the hand of God. Consequent conscience is the faculty exercising its office in reference to actions when they are past. It then pronounces them to be good or bad, worthy of praise or of blame, of reward or of punishment. In this view, it is called an accuser, a witness, a judge. The design of the two epithets is to specify the two provinces

assigned to conscience in the soul of man ; namely, to warn him against sin, and excite him to his duty ; and to approve of him or condemn him, according as he has regarded or disregarded its voice.

Secondly, Conscience is distinguished into enlightened or right, and erring. A right or enlightened conscience is properly instructed in the nature and extent of our duty, and its judgments are conformable to truth. I need hardly remark, that the source of the light which shines in it, is the Word of God. An erring conscience is mistaken in its judgments, and calls good evil and evil good. We have an example of an erring conscience in Paul before his conversion, who “ verily thought,” or whose conscience dictated to him, that he should oppose the religion and persecute the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth ; and an example also in all the unbelieving Jews, who had “ a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” * The errors of conscience arise from ignorance of Scripture, from misapprehension of its meaning, from the adoption of human opinions as the standard of conduct, and from the influence of the appetites and passions, by which the understanding is blinded and perverted. To this subject the following words of our Saviour refer : “ If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !” † The light which is in us, is conscience ; and if it be darkened by error, our condition is truly pitiable, as we shall then wander into devious paths, and at the same time proceed with the greatest confidence, being fully persuaded that it is directing us aright.

In the third place, Conscience is distinguished into firm or assured, and doubting. By the former, we understand a conscience which has a clear perception of duty, and is embarrassed with no difficulties respecting the decision to which it ought to come. We have seen, indeed, that an erring conscience may be fully assured, and it often happens that men are never more confident than when they are egregiously wrong ; but we are speaking at present of a conscience which proceeds upon the footing of clear, unquestionable evidence. There is no room for doubt, whether we should sanctify the Sabbath, obey our parents, pay our just debts, and relieve the necessities of the

* Acts xxvi. 9. Rom. x. 2.

† Matth. vi. 23.

poor. But occasions occur when the mind has nothing to guide its decisions but conjectures and probabilities; occasions, when the equality of the reasons on both sides of a question leaves it in a state of suspense; occasions, when the arguments on one side preponderate, but some little difficulty, to which greater importance is attached than it deserves, hinders the mind from coming to a satisfactory conclusion. In all these cases, conscience is subject to doubt, more or less strong, according to the degree of the evidence for and against. And here I may take notice of what is called a scrupulous conscience, or a conscience which is in constant perplexity, making objections to every thing, startling at shadows, suspecting evil in what is perfectly innocent, and never able to decide whether what it does is lawful or unlawful. It arises from weakness of intellect, from melancholy of temperament, from gloomy ideas of religion, from the spirit of superstition, from the prejudices of education which have established an arbitrary standard of morality, and from associating with the timid and narrow-minded. It is a cause of torment to the person himself, and a plague to those around him, who are perpetually in danger of offending him, and upon whose liberty he is incessantly endeavouring to encroach.

In the fourth place, Conscience may be distinguished into timid and delicate. These terms are sometimes confounded, but they convey different ideas. A timid conscience is easily alarmed, acts with hesitation, and is full of suspicions that there is something wrong in our actions. It must therefore disquiet the bosom in which it resides. A delicate, or tender conscience, is not a troublesome inmate, but a vigilant guide amidst the snares and dangers of life. It is feelingly alive to the calls of duty, and recoils even from the appearance of evil. It shrinks with instinctive sensibility from the touch of pollution. It is like a polished surface, on which the slightest breath is seen; it is like the eye, which is hurt by a mote, and makes an instantaneous effort to eject it. Tenderness of conscience does not resemble the soreness of a diseased part, but the nice discrimination of those organs which are most amply furnished with nerves. It is easily distinguishable from a scrupulous conscience; for they are real sins by which the former is offended, whereas those which the latter dreads

are imaginary. This often strains at a gnat, and swallows a camel; but a tender conscience holds sin in abhorrence, when it presents itself in its most specious forms. Such was the conscience of the Psalmist, when he hated every false and wicked way, and esteemed God's precepts concerning all things to be right.*

In the fifth place, Conscience may be distinguished into awakened and hardened. When we speak of an awakened conscience, the epithet supposes it to have been previously asleep, and such is its state in a great part of mankind. I do not mean that its powers are absolutely dormant, for there are few who are not occasionally at least admonished and re-proved by it; but that in general it does not perform its office with firmness and fidelity, but leaves the sinner in a great measure ignorant of his own character. It is said to be awakened, when it is roused, by the word of God or the dispensations of providence, to the faithful performance of its duty; when it not only remonstrates against our present sins, but recalls the past to remembrance; when it accuses and condemns the guilty man, and anticipates the ratification of its sentences at the tribunal of God. A hardened conscience is without feeling. It has lost its power through a long course of transgression, so that it opposes no obstacle to the sinner, gives no warning, denounces no threatening, but permits him to do as he pleases. The mind is so blinded, that it does not perceive the difference between good and evil, or the heart is so callous, that the perception makes no impression upon it. In this state conscience is sometimes said to be cauterized, from the Greek word *καυτηριαζω*, which signifies to *brand* or *burn with a hot iron*. It is used in the First Epistle to Timothy, and is translated "seared with a hot iron,"† the metaphor being founded upon the effect of hot iron, in rendering the part of the body insensible to which it has been applied. Some, however, understand it to mean that the consciences of the persons spoken of are spotted or marked with sin, as if they had been branded. Be this as it may, the idea commonly suggested by a seared conscience is, that it has lost all feeling.

In the last place, not to multiply particulars, Conscience may be distinguished into good and bad. The first has been

* Ps. cxix. 128.

† 1 Tim. iv. 2.

defined to be a conscience, the judgments of which are conformable to the standard of duty, and which approves of our conduct. The epithet, however, is sometimes used, not to express the conformity of its judgments to the standard, but simply its approbation. In this sense, although a man should be in an error, he has a good conscience when he has acted according to his ideas of duty. It is probable that Paul affixed this meaning to the term, when he said to the Jewish Council, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day,"* for his words seem to refer to his whole past life; and in that part of it which preceded his conversion, he could be said to have had a good conscience, only because he was then sincere, and faithfully obeyed its dictates, however erroneous. By a bad conscience is sometimes meant a conscience which judges falsely, pronouncing sin to be duty and duty to be sin, and which, consequently, absolves when it should condemn, and condemns when it should absolve. But at present a bad conscience signifies an accusing conscience, and it is called bad, not because its judgments are erroneous, but because it torments the sinner, and inflicts upon him the agonies of remorse. Such a conscience disquiets a man in the midst of profound external peace; it makes him tremble when there is no visible danger; it covers him with shame by his own reflections, although to all around him his guilt is unknown. A look, which perhaps means nothing, but which he interprets as significant, quells his confidence; he is discomposed by an accidental word, which seems to glance at his secret crimes. Conscience has made many cowards.

I now proceed to speak of peace of conscience. I begin with observing, that there is a state of mind which resembles it, but ought not to be confounded with it, because it is totally different in its nature and its consequences. I mean a state of security, which excludes fear and disquietude, and may therefore be called peace, but differs from the peace which I am about to consider, as it rests upon no solid foundation, and is the effect, not of religion, but of confirmed habits of sin, and misconceptions of the character of God.

* Acts xxiii. 1.

In some cases it is the effect of atheistical principles, or of principles which are equivalent to atheism. If a man has persuaded himself that there is no God, or that the Being whom we call God pays no regard to the actions of his creatures; that the soul is mortal as well as the body; and that there is no state of retribution beyond the grave; it is easy to see that this man will be exempt from the apprehensions which agitate other men, and will enjoy a kind of peace very different from the peace of religion.

Another cause of security is the power of sin, by which the voice of conscience has been silenced, and the mind fixed solely upon the business and the pleasures of the world, so that other subjects engage no share of its attention. The law of God and the future state, death and judgment, are entirely forgotten; or, if they should accidentally occur to the mind, they produce no effect, or an effect so slight, that it is instantly obliterated.

Sometimes security is the consequence of false ideas of the mercy of God; of a persuasion that he is so merciful, that he will not animadvert upon the failings of his creatures, and that, if they only pray to him now and then to forgive them, they shall undoubtedly be pardoned.

At other times, security arises from a false estimate of their own character; and this may take place in two different ways. Men may imagine that they have fulfilled the demands of the law perfectly, or at least to such an extent as is necessary to their acceptance with God. Many a self-righteous man has lived and died without fear, in the flattering thought that he had made peace with his Maker by his obedience. Of this description was the Pharisee in the parable, who "thanked God that he was not like other men." Again, men who profess to believe that we cannot be justified by works, may be secure, through the groundless persuasion that they are possessed of the faith by which an interest is obtained in the righteousness and salvation of Christ. They have faith, but it is dead while they suppose it to be living. Hence, they conclude that they are in favour with God, and have nothing to fear from the dreadful threatenings denounced against sinners.

From these causes, a great part of mankind pass their time

in complete apathy, or experience only occasional misgivings of mind.

Is there no such thing as true peace of conscience? Yes; it is a precious blessing which God bestows upon his people, and which flows from the privileges formerly considered. There is a peace which Jesus Christ has bequeathed as an invaluable legacy to his disciples; there is a peace with which the God of peace “fills them in believing;” * there is a peace which “passes all understanding, and keeps their minds and hearts through Jesus Christ;” † there is a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It consists in an assurance that God is no longer angry with them; that he will not reckon with them for their sins; that he has freely pardoned them; that he has received them into favour; that he will protect and bless them, and give them eternal rest in the world to come. None can estimate the value of this blessing but those who enjoy it. It is a continual feast; it is the joy and sunshine of the soul. Although we could claim the whole world as our heritage; although its crowns of glory were ours, and its delights crowded around to minister to our wishes, without this peace we should be miserable; but it is the solace of the soul, amidst the external evils which are so much dreaded, poverty, affliction, persecution, and contempt. To him who enjoys this privilege, we may justly apply the vain boast of the poet concerning his just man, that the rage of the multitude, the threatenings of tyrants, the commotions of the elements, the fall of the world itself, could not dismay him. *Impavidum ferient ruinæ.* ‡ With an approving conscience, and God as his friend, what has he to fear?

Peace of conscience is founded upon peace with God. Now, peace with God is inseparably connected with the blessings of justification and adoption, which, in one point of view, may be considered as the same privilege under different aspects. As we are naturally enemies to God, so he is an enemy to us, for “he is angry with the wicked every day.” A reconciliation, therefore, is necessary, and it has been effected by the atonement of Christ. When the pardon of sin, and restoration to the Divine favour, which are offered in the

* Rom. xv. 13.

† Phil. iv. 7.

‡ Horat. Carm. iii. 3.

Gospel, are humbly and thankfully received by the sinner ; when he draws near to God through Jesus Christ, confessing his guilt and unworthiness, and imploring his mercy ; the reconciliation of which the foundation was laid by the blood of the cross, is completed. God enters into covenant with the sinner, and assures him that “ he will be no more wroth with him, nor rebuke him.”

When this important fact is known to the believer, peace of mind ensues. Who shall lay any thing to his charge ? Justice is appeased ; the demands of the law are satisfied ; God has forgiven him, and conscience has therefore no accusation to bring. The memory of his past sins is not obliterated, and when he thinks of them, he is overwhelmed with shame and sorrow ; but the reflection does not alarm him. He has nothing to fear. Conscience summoned him to the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge ; but there he was acquitted, and it is henceforth silent. The believer obtains this peace by the contemplation of the mercy of God, of the all-sufficient merit and prevalent intercession of Christ, and of the promises confirmed with an oath ; in all which, he sees an inviolable security that he shall “ not come into condemnation.” He obtains it by the assistance of the Spirit, “ bearing witness with his spirit that he is a son of God,” forming in him the characters by which the members of the heavenly family are distinguished.

This leads me to remark, that peace of conscience is also connected with the privilege of sanctification. Although God has fully pardoned believers, and will never cast them off, yet he sometimes suspends the sense of his favour, for the chastisement of their sins. In such cases they are disquieted and distressed, as we learn from the history of the saints, David, and Asaph, and Heman who says, “ While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted.” * Their guilt, which was cancelled, presents itself again ; and, having lost for a time an assurance of the love of God, they experience their former fears. Hence it appears, that their peace will bear a proportion to their diligence and success in the cultivation of holiness. I do not mean that any of their good works are so perfect that conscience will find nothing to accuse ; but that the more be-

* Ps. lxxxviii. 15.

lievers abound in them, the evidence will be clearer of the sincerity of their faith, and God will testify his approbation of them by manifestations of his love. This is obviously imported in the following exhortation: "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."* The Apostle John teaches the same doctrine in several passages of his first Epistle, and particularly in the following words: "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not,"—that is, if it bear testimony to the sincerity of our love and obedience,—“then have we confidence toward God.”† Paul points out the connexion between holiness and peace of mind, when he says, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."‡

Peace of conscience flows from peace with God. It is maintained by faith in Christ, whose blood will cleanse us from our daily sins, and by a careful study to please God in doing his will. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them."|| This is the reward which God bestows at present upon the righteous. They find that there is profit in serving him. The heavenly calm within is a more precious recompense than outward prosperity, which smiles deceitfully, and is often followed by a storm. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."§

From what has been now said, it appears that religion is not that gloomy anxious service which it is frequently conceived to be. If it imposes restraints and demands sacrifices, it compensates these by the happy state of mind which it excites. In order more fully to illustrate this point, I proceed to speak of spiritual joy, which is another native consequence of the privileges which have been considered. The

* 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

|| Ps. cxix. 165.

† 1 John iii. 18—21.

§ Is. xxxii. 17.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 12.

Scriptures make frequent mention of it ; and it is represented as distinct from peace, although closely connected with it. “ Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement,” or reconciliation. *

Joy is that delighted, elevated state of mind, which arises from the possession of present, and the anticipation of future good. Both these causes contribute to the joy of Christians.

First, They have an interest in Christ, to whom they are united by faith, as the branches are united to the vine, and the members of the body to the head. He is the source of their privileges and hopes, and hence they are sometimes represented as rejoicing in him alone. “ Whom having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” † The state into which they have been admitted by divine grace, is safe and honourable, for they are justified by the sentence of the Supreme Judge, and sanctified by the Spirit of holiness ; but they are men compassed with infirmities, carrying about with them the remains of depravity, often falling into sin, and chargeable with defects in all their duties. It seems impossible, therefore, that their minds should be tranquil and cheerful, because conscience, which in them is faithful and tender, must cause disquiet by its accusations and remonstrances. And certainly their peace would be liable to perpetual disturbance, and their joy would soon give place to sorrow, if its continuance depended upon themselves. It is their connexion with Jesus Christ, which realizes what might otherwise be pronounced to be impracticable, and accounts for what at first view appears utterly incredible,—that they who are daily offending may yet daily rejoice. The view of his atonement, as we formerly remarked, brings relief to their minds, and for the sake of their Redeemer, God continues to behold them with a pleasant countenance. No interruption takes place of the friendly intercourse between him and them ; and it is maintained with ineffable kindness on his part, and with the highest delight upon theirs. When they sin, their Advocate appears for them before the throne of heaven, and pleading

* Rom. v. 11.

† 1 Pet. i. 8.

his own merits in their behalf, preserves the reconciliation unbroken. Looking to themselves, they find innumerable causes of fear and despondency; but looking to him, they perceive solid grounds of confidence and joy. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

Secondly, Another source of the joy of believers is the relation in which God stands to them. Upon his favour the happiness of intelligent creatures obviously depends. God is the most glorious Being in the universe, in whom every possible perfection resides, all that is great and fair is assembled. The contemplation of his character, therefore, as exhibited in the Gospel, in which condescension is associated with majesty, grace to the unworthy with unspotted purity and inflexible justice;—the contemplation of a character so amiable and so august, which displays the harmony of qualities which seemed to be for ever opposed, looking with a benignant aspect upon man, is calculated to awaken high emotions of admiration and delight. Accordingly, we find the saints earnestly requesting a manifestation of it, in preference to all the splendid shews and bewitching pleasures of the world. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."† How transporting the thought to believers, that this glorious Being is their own by a peculiar and intimate relation; is not only the object of their worship and love, but the inexhaustible and everlasting source of their felicity! "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him."‡ There they possess all that their hearts can desire, and more than tongue can express. "They are satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and their mouths praise him with joyful lips."|| There is no good thing which they may despair of obtaining; for the riches of his goodness are pledged to supply their wants, and the fulness of heaven itself is but a part of what he is able to bestow. Are they in solitude, forsaken by the world and by their friends? God is always near, to cheer their lonely hours with sweeter enjoyments than those of friendship and love. Do the afflictions

* 1 John i. 7. † Ps. xxvii. 4. ‡ Lam. iii. 24. || Ps. lxiii. 5.

of the present life come upon them? While they are assured that these shall not separate them from his love, they can trace the footsteps of their Father in the darkness and the tempest, and discern wisdom and goodness in apparent disorder and severity; they kiss the rod which is wielded by his gracious hand, and welcome the stripes which promote the health of their souls. As soon as a man can look upon the God of salvation as his own,—and this is the privilege of those who have been admitted into a state of grace,—the scenery around assumes a new aspect, and displays charms which never before met the eye. He beholds every where objects of pleasing admiration, and causes of heart-melting gratitude. Nature shines with the glory of its Maker. Mercies acquire a sweeter relish; afflictions lose half their bitterness; life rises in value, as the gift of love for purposes of infinite importance; death is divested of its terrors; the present is the seed-time of grace, and the future is the harvest of glory. In short, he enjoys God in every thing, and every thing in God.

A third source of joy to believers, who have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, is the inhabitation of the Spirit of grace. I must not stop to prove that the Holy Ghost dwells in their souls, but shall assume a truth acknowledged by all who are worthy to be called Christians, and illustrated in the preceding part of this Course, when we were treating of regeneration and sanctification. It is of importance to consider the character in which he is present with believers, or the office which he is appointed to perform. As a Divine Person, he inhabits the temple of the universe, and heaven and earth are sustained, and beautified, and enlivened by his influence; but he selects the souls of believers as the scene of his gracious operations. There he is present as the Spirit of truth and consolation; and it is his office to diffuse the cheering and tranquillizing light of heaven; to shed a Divine serenity over the thoughts and feelings; to inspire and strengthen good principles; to elevate the affections above secular objects; to give a taste of the sweetness of spiritual things; to awaken hope, with all its blissful anticipations. To what can he be so fitly compared, as “to a well of living

water, springing up to everlasting life?"* It is our Saviour's own similitude, and is alike worthy of notice for its expressiveness and its beauty. Like a fountain which is in perpetual motion, and pours out its stream in summer and in winter, he exerts his gracious power in youth, in manhood, and in old age, to promote the growth of grace, and to give them a foretaste of celestial bliss. The joy of the Christian is therefore not only pure, but permanent. No man can take it from him. He is satisfied from himself; not from his own virtue and the resources of his own mind, as the old philosophers were wont vainly and presumptuously to boast; but from the communications of this Divine inmate in his bosom, whose presence is life, and whose favour is the sunshine of the soul. *Omnia mea mecum porto*, said one of the self-sufficient wise men of antiquity; but it was a poor stock, and he must have starved upon it without the assistance of pride. The Christian who has the Holy Ghost dwelling in his heart, can say with truth that he "carries all his treasures with him;" for whithersoever he goes, and in whatever situation he is placed, his joy remains, and is full. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."†

In connexion with this particular, I may mention, in the fourth place, the doctrines and promises of the word of God, as a source of spiritual joy; for although the operations of the Spirit are distinct from these, they are always carried on in concurrence with them. It is by his application of them to their hearts that Christians are filled with joy and peace in believing. It is from the word of God that they learn the nature and extent of the privileges which the mediation of Christ has procured for them, and the securities that they shall hold them in perpetual possession. Hence we can account for the high value which they set upon it, the interest with which they peruse its contents, and the inexpressible satisfaction which, according to their own testimony, it imparts to their minds. "More to be desired are thy testimonies than gold, yea than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb."‡ Let us attend to its influence in communicating joy to them in the season of affliction. Pain

* John iv. 14.

† Rom. xiv. 17.

‡ Ps. xix. 10.

is as uneasy to them as to other men ; they feel disappointments as severely, and are equally apt to despond and to sink under the burden of calamity. On such occasions the efficacy of the word of God is experienced. It enables believers to adopt that consoling train of reasoning which Paul pursues, in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and to infer from the death, resurrection, and intercession of Christ, not only their present justification before God, but their uninterrupted interest in his love. " Who shall separate us from the love of Christ ? shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or persecution, or nakedness, or peril, or sword ? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." * Thus the word of God illuminates the darkest events ; and faith relying upon its assurances, keeps alive hope in circumstances which seem to justify despair, and turns the complaints and wailings of nature into songs of salvation. The people of God can rejoice in tribulation, because they know that it is sent with a benevolent design, and that it will terminate in their present and eternal good. With the staff of the promises in their hands, they fear no evil when they are pursuing their lonely journey in the valley and shadow of death. Providence sometimes speaks the language of wrath ; but the word always speaks the language of love. Providence is sometimes like the stormy sky, in which neither sun nor star appears for many days ; but the word is like the serene atmosphere of summer, illuminated by the solar rays, and shewing on all sides agreeable objects. Hence it has been " the song of the saints in the house of their pilgrimage ;" and we have their testimony, that " unless it had quickened them, they should have perished in their affliction."

The last source of spiritual joy which I shall mention, is hope, the influence of which we have all experienced. It exerts a sort of magic power, by which distant objects are brought near, and the future is made present, and we enjoy

* Rom. viii. 35—39.

beforehand the good of which we cannot immediately obtain the actual possession. He whose bosom is animated by hope, is transported from the scene around him, to another fairer and more blissful; and, tasting its delights by anticipation, he is sometimes raised above the painful sense of his actual circumstances. If such is its effect when it is only an illusion of fancy, and at best its objects are confined to this diurnal sphere, what must be its power when it brings to bear upon the heart the surpassing glories of the world to come! The hope of the Christian conducts him by its light beyond the boundaries of time, and fixes his views and desires upon the realities of eternity. When his eye is steadily directed to heaven, and catches a glimpse of its scenes, of the magnificence of which no terrestrial splendour can furnish even a faint image, how light must the evils of life appear, and how diminutive its pleasures! We do not wonder to hear that believers rejoice, when it is added, "that they rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" a hope sufficient to warm the coldest heart, and to elevate the most depressed. This hope is founded on the righteousness of Christ, which was imputed to them when they believed. It is cherished by the Spirit of adoption, sent forth into their hearts as the earnest of the future inheritance; and it is strengthened by their progress in holiness, from which it appears that they are destined to possess that inheritance, and are now in a train of preparation for it. And hence we see to what cause it is owing that they are reconciled to a very hard lot in this world, and are content and happy in circumstances which would overwhelm others with dejection. Their minds are busy in making comparisons, not between their own condition and that of others who are more prosperous,—for such comparisons are the food and the fuel of discontent,—but between their present and their future state, between what they now suffer and what they shall hereafter enjoy. Thus the Christian is elevated in a great measure above the influence of temporal things. They affect him but little when his faith and hope are strong. If they are disagreeable, they are of short duration; and his prospects are so consoling and interesting, that he has neither leisure nor inclination to give himself much concern about his temporary accommodation. He who is hastening to take

possession of a kingdom, will not be made unhappy by being uncomfortably lodged for a single night on the road. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

Such are the sources of the joy of believers in Christ. We see on what grounds the Scripture pronounces them to be blessed, and can enter into the spirit of the song of praise and thanksgiving which is sung by the church: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."†

Let not the doctrine concerning the joy which flows from faith be misunderstood. It is not meant to assert, that those who have been justified, and adopted into the family of God, always feel transports and ecstasies. No such thing is implied, even in the exhortation to "rejoice evermore;"‡ nor would a state of perpetual rapture be consistent with their present condition, and their business in this world. If, in some happy moments, they are elevated to the mount of God, and, holding fellowship with him, lose the remembrance of sublunary things, they must again descend into the plain, and walk with men in the ordinary duties of life. For these, I think, they would be disqualified, were their minds powerfully affected at all times by bright visions of the glory of God and of heaven, and by such an overpowering sense of his love as the saints have sometimes experienced. The lively foretaste of future felicity is only occasional; and, in the usual train of life, they can expect nothing more than that tranquillity of mind, that placid frame, that calm cheerfulness and sober joy, which flow from the faith and hope of the Gospel. These may be compared to their daily food; but the former are delicacies and cordials, by which their exhausted strength is restored, and the injuries which sorrow has inflicted are repaired.

Still less should it be supposed, that Christians experience joy without interruption, because the sources of it are unfa-

* Rom. viii. 18.

† Isa. xii. 1—3.

‡ 1 Thess. v. 16.

ing. Their state is always safe, but their feelings are not always comfortable. It is certain, however, that, if their joy suffers interruptions, and they live in fear, perplexity, and dejection, the fault is their own. They must co-operate with God, both by avoiding whatever would counteract his gracious designs, and by a diligent use of the means appointed to give them effect.

They must live by faith, for their peace and joy will be in proportion to it. A man would not be delighted by the most beautiful objects in nature which he did not see, nor relieved from the apprehension of want by great riches which he did not know himself to possess: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When Paul triumphed in affliction, it was through faith: "I am *persuaded* that nothing shall separate us from the love of God." * When Asaph was dejected, unbelief was the cause: "I said, this is mine infirmity." †

They must beware of "forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns which can hold no water." In other words, they must beware of setting their affections upon any other than God, and of seeking happiness from any inferior source. It is their folly in doing so which is the cause of all their inquietudes. If we hold up a dark body between us and the sun, must we not be in the shade? How can they rejoice who, with their own hands, shut out joy from their souls? If we wish God to remain in his temple, and to fill it with his glory, we must not permit any rival to usurp his place, nor erect an altar for unhallowed sacrifices. When sin in any form is indulged, the most fatal consequences ensue; as we learn from the earnest prayer of David, after God had been provoked to withdraw a sense of his love, and was testifying his displeasure against him: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." ‡

Once more, They must be diligent, zealous, and constant in obedience, for thus the soul is maintained in a healthy

* Rom. viii. 38.

† Ps. lxxvii. 10.

‡ 1b. li. 8, 11, 12.

vigorous state, and is capable of receiving and relishing spiritual joy ; whereas by remissness, it becomes relaxed and languid. It is not to be expected that God will smile upon his disobedient children ; but, to the dutiful, he will give unequivocal proofs of his approbation : “ Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways.” * Christians have always found, that when they walked with God in the exercise of faith, and the practical study of holiness, they were visited with the light of his countenance ; but that darkness and distress were the never-failing consequences of the omission and careless performance of their duty.

Such are the methods by which Christians will secure to themselves the happiness which God has provided for them : “ If they do these things, they shall never fall.” † Life will flow on in the pure tranquil pleasures of religion ; and their death will come to fill up the measure of their bliss in the heavenly world, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, because the former things shall have passed away.

* Is. lxiv. 5.

† 2 Pet. i. 10.

LECTURE LXXIX.

ON THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

DIFFERENT OPINIONS RESPECTING THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.—
THEIR TOTAL OR FINAL FALL IMPOSSIBLE.—THEIR PERSEVERANCE IN-
FERRED FROM THE IMMUTABLE DECREE AND THE COVENANT OF GOD,
THE MEDIATION OF CHRIST, AND THE INDWELLING AND OFFICES OF
THE SPIRIT.—EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE ALLEGED
AGAINST THIS DOCTRINE.

WE have seen, that sinners are brought into a state of favour with God through faith in Jesus Christ; and that the Holy Spirit is given to them, by whom they are sanctified, that they may serve God in this world, and may be qualified for being admitted into his immediate presence in the next. The happiness which they enjoy in consequence of these privileges is great. At peace with their Maker, they have peace in their own minds, and look forward to the future state with the anticipations of hope. There is only one thing wanting to complete their happiness, so far as it can be perfect in the present life; and that is, the certain knowledge that their present state is stable and immutable, and that those anticipations will be realized. If their interest in the salvation of Christ is secured beyond the possibility of change, they may, with the Apostle, triumphantly bid defiance to all the powers of earth and hell; if, however, they may fall from a state of grace, there is not only a call for vigilance, but ground of anxiety, and their prospect will often be darkened by fearful forebodings. The question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, is not a mere speculation, but is inti-

mately connected with their peace and consolation ; and, according as it is decided, will have a powerful influence in rendering their religion cheerful or gloomy.

Upon this subject, professed Christians are divided in sentiment, as indeed they are upon almost every article of faith. The doctrine of our Church, in which, I believe, all the Reformed Churches concurred, is expressed in the following words. “ They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace ; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” * The Church of England, which has a Calvinistic creed, although, as the great Lord Chatham said, her liturgy is Popish, and her clergy, many of them at least, are Arminian, teaches us the same doctrine in the seventeenth article. “ They which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God,” namely election, “ be called according to God’s purpose, by his Spirit working in due season ; they through grace obey the calling ; they be justified freely ; they be made sons of God by adoption ; they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ ; they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

It is well known to you all, I presume, that the followers of Arminius maintain a very different doctrine, and that this is one of the articles by which their creed is distinguished from that of the followers of Calvin. Their sentiments are thus expressed by themselves. “ True believers may apostatize from the true faith, and fall into such sins as are inconsistent with true and justifying faith ; nay, it is not only possible for them to do so, but it frequently comes to pass. True believers may by their own fault become guilty of great and abominable crimes, and may continue and die in the same, and consequently may finally fall into perdition.” † After this authoritative statement, it may be deemed superfluous to subjoin the sentiments of an individual, but I shall quote the words of Limborch, their celebrated Professor of Theology. “ We maintain that, notwithstanding divine grace, by which a believer may persevere in faith, there remains in man a power

* Conf. chap. xvii. §. i.

† Confession of Remonstrants, as quoted in Brandt’s History of the Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. iii. p. 89.

of falling away, and, therefore, that a believer may totally lose his faith and regeneration, and may continue in apostasy to the end of his life, and so eternally perish." * The Remonstrants are supported in this article of their creed by Papists, for the Council of Trent has decreed that "if any person shall say that a man who has been justified, cannot lose grace, and that therefore he who falls and sins was never truly justified, he shall be accursed." †

It is granted that believers, under the influence of temptation, may commit great sins, which are highly offensive to men and provoking to God. We have two remarkable examples in Scripture. The first is David, who seduced the wife of his neighbour, and then devised the murder of her husband. The atrocity of both actions is manifest; but the latter implied deeper guilt on several accounts, and particularly because it was the result of deliberation and contrivance; and being posterior to the other, it showed that he continued for a considerable time in a state of moral insensibility. The second is Peter, who denied his Lord, and whose crime was aggravated, because it was committed although he had been forewarned; because it was repeated a second and a third time; and because it was accompanied with oaths and imprecations, in themselves profane, and which changed his false affirmation into perjury. There is no doubt, that other saints have been guilty of the same sins, or of others equally heinous. It is not to be supposed, indeed, that such cases are of frequent occurrence, because then there would be no visible difference between those who have, and those who want the grace of God. There would then be no answer to the prayer of our Saviour for the former, that his Father would keep them from the evil of the world; and to their own prayer, that he would keep them back from presumptuous sins, and not suffer them to have dominion over them. Believers, living by faith in the Son of God from whom their strength is derived, and diligently using the appointed means, are enabled to walk in holiness and righteousness, and to be blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke. But as such cases do sometimes occur, the adversaries of the doctrine of perseve-

* Limboich, Theol. Lib. v. cap. lxxx.
canon xxiii.

† Decret. De Justificatione,

rance eagerly lay hold of them as an argument against it. How could those persons, continuing saints, have acted such a part? Where was their faith, when they denied the Lord that bought them? Where was their love to God, when in the most daring manner they trampled on his law? Concerning these two examples, I would remark, before I proceed to the general argument, that, strong as they seem, they are by no means conclusive against the doctrine which I mean to establish. Great as appears to have been the insensibility of David till he was awakened by the reproof of Nathan, we cannot consider him as having totally lost all religious principle. The seed was in the ground although it gave no signs of vegetation. This may be inferred from his prayer: "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me;"* in which it is implied, that the Spirit had not utterly withdrawn from him, although it was a punishment which he deserved and earnestly deprecated. The same remark may be made upon Peter; in whom we are assured by the prayer of our Saviour for him, that faith remained even at the time when he had renounced it in words. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."† Observe the particularity of this prayer. All the disciples were to be exposed to temptation, and no doubt our Lord interceded for them all; but he speaks of Peter alone, because he was to fall more foully than his brethren; and if the prayer was answered, his faith did not utterly fail.

We assert, then, that true believers cannot fall totally or finally from grace. It may seem that the use of both these words is unnecessary, because, if they cannot fall totally, it follows that they cannot fall finally; but they are intended to oppose the doctrine of Arminians, who affirm, that although a saint may fall totally from grace, he may be restored by repentance; but that since this is uncertain, and does not always take place, he may also fall finally, and die in his sins. Now, we affirm, that the total apostacy of believers is impossible, not in the nature of things, but by the divine constitution; and consequently, that no man who has been once

* Ps. li. 11.

† Luke xxii. 31.

received into the divine favour can be ultimately deprived of salvation.

The doctrine of our church respecting the perseverance of the saints, is supported by a variety of arguments.

First, It is proved from the decree of God concerning them, which was formerly shewn to be immutable. They were predestinated to life, and shall infallibly obtain it, if the purposes of God are not changeable like those of men, and liable to be frustrated by opposition which he did not foresee and could not prevent. But the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his will;" and the design of the economy of providence and grace is to carry his purposes into effect. Accordingly, the Scriptures exhibit a chain of events stretching from eternity to eternity, not one of the links of which can be broken. "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." * Predestination and eternal glory are connected by the intermediate links of vocation and justification; each follows the other in regular succession; the second is as certain as the first, the third as the second, and the fourth as the third; they are all expressed in the past time, probably to signify that, although the last is future, it is as certain as if it had already taken place. Those who deny the perseverance of the saints break this chain, and affirm that the decree of predetermination may prove abortive, that our calling may be made void, and that the sentence of pardon pronounced upon a believer may be revoked. But how contrary is this doctrine to the general tenor of Scripture, which proclaims the security of believers, and calls upon them to rejoice in hope of the glory of God! How contrary to these words of our Lord! "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." † To say that the words, "if it were possible," imply only the great difficulty of the thing, because the same phrase is used in some cases when an absolute impossibility cannot be understood, is to wrest them from their natural meaning to serve a

* Rom. viii. 30.

† Matth. xxiv. 24.

particular purpose. Our Saviour foretells a time of trial in which none should escape except the elect; but this interpretation makes him say that many should be seduced, and perhaps the elect too, but with greater difficulty. And for what purpose did he say so? It was not surely to encourage his disciples, for this view of the matter would give them no consolation, as the difficulty might be overcome, and they also might apostatize. And how does this comment agree with his own words in a preceding verse? "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened;" or with his words in the parallel passage in Luke, "But there shall not a hair of your head perish."* Why all this care of the elect, expressed by shortening the days, if still they might be deceived? And why so solemnly assure them of their preservation from bodily harm, if still they were in danger of losing their souls? Taking all the passages together, we confidently conclude, that the words under consideration import not merely a difficulty, but an absolute impossibility. And whence this impossibility arose, we are informed by another sacred writer, who tells us that the saints "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."†

The next argument is taken from the nature of the covenant which God has made with his people. It is not transitory, like the first covenant, but is everlasting; and hence its blessings are promised, not for a time, but for ever. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."‡ There are two engagements in this single promise, both which God has pledged himself to fulfil. He promises not to turn away from his people to do them good; and he promises to put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him. The second engagement is necessary to the fulfilment of the first. Were they to depart from God, to break off all connexion with him, and to return to the service of Satan, he could not continue to do them good, consistently with the holiness of his character; but he will preserve them in such a state that he may hold fellowship with them, without any

* Matth. xxiv. 22. Luke xxi. 18. † 1 Pet. i. 5. ‡ Jer. xxxii. 40.

impeachment of his honour. Let it not, in defiance of the promise itself, which makes no mention of any condition, be said that the promise is conditional; and that it is only understood that God will continue to be gracious to them, if they continue to fear him, which, however, they may cease to do. It is true, indeed, that they are fallible and changeable; but the danger to be apprehended from this quarter is effectually guarded against; for, in the new covenant, the perseverance of the saints is secured by the provision of the means. God has pledged himself to put his fear in their hearts, or to grant to them such communications of his grace as shall preserve them from falling away. To the same purport are the following words of our Saviour: "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* We shall more fully understand the import of these words, if we compare them with the preceding verse: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Both taken together, contain a solemn assurance that the sheep of Christ, or those who hear his voice, and know and follow him, shall be eternally saved. Yes, say our adversaries; none can pluck them out of the hand of God, and they shall not perish through any want of power on his part; but they may withdraw themselves from his hand by their own voluntary act. Let us see, then, what is the sense of the words upon this supposition. Our Lord solemnly assures his followers, that no created power shall wrest them out of his hand, or that of his Father. It is quite evident that physical force is here out of the question, and that it could never enter into the mind of any man in his senses, that this could have any success in a struggle with Omnipotence. It is a moral power of which he must be understood to speak; by which, I mean the power of arguments, and promises, and threatenings, to induce them to apostatize from the faith. What then does he tell his disciples? He tells them, that neither man nor devil should succeed in tempting them to apostacy, unless they gave their consent; a piece of information not new nor necessary, as all his disciples, and every person of common sense, knew it before; for it is as clear as

* John x. 29.

sunshine, that temptation will do us no harm, if we do not comply with it. This silly truism, it seems, is the amount of our Lord's solemn declaration, twice delivered, concerning the safety of believers. No person can draw them into apostasy unless they yield to seduction. With such downright nonsense, as we might call it did it not deserve to be branded as an impious perversion of Scripture, is the hypothesis of Arminians supported; and an attempt is made to wrest from the people of God one of the best sources of their consolation. By the same miserable expedient, they endeavour to evade the evidence of other declarations and promises which teach the perseverance of the saints. There is implied in them this condition,—that they shall obtain eternal salvation, if they are not wanting to themselves; or, in other words, the Scriptures tell us that the saints arrive at the end of their journey, if they continue to walk in the way, and do not turn aside into a by-path.

The Apostle Paul plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, when he asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” and goes on to shew, that no change or trouble which may befall them can effect a separation: “Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us.”* To this subject we may also apply the following passage: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”†

I shall now lay before you some other arguments for the perseverance of the saints, which are founded on the mediation of Christ.

The first argument is, that those for whom he laid down his life shall certainly be saved, because he has paid the full price of their redemption. Some, indeed, tell us that the design of his death was merely to render God placable, that thus there might be no obstacle to the restoration of sinners

* Rom. viii. 35, 37.

† Is. liv. 9, 10.

to his favour if they should comply with the terms, and to their final salvation if they should continue faithful and obedient to the end of their lives. It is evident that the perseverance of the saints has no necessary connexion with the hypothesis. When God was rendered placable, the design of our Saviour's death was fully accomplished, although not one individual of the human race had been actually reconciled to him. But the hypothesis is false. God was placable without any respect to the death of his Son; and of this he has assured us, by declaring that he freely loved the world, and that the mission of his Son was the consequence of this love. It amounts to the same thing to say, as others do, that Christ died for all men, or, that his death so pleased God that he has established a dispensation of grace, by which all men have an opportunity of obtaining salvation. According to this scheme, nothing is fixed with respect to individuals, and the final perdition of those who once believed does not interfere with its arrangements. The view which the Scriptures give of the design of the death of Christ is totally different. They inform us that it was a sacrifice of atonement offered for us; that our "iniquities were laid upon him," and "he bore them in his own body on the tree;" and they plainly teach the doctrine of substitution. Now, as a surety stands in the room of the person whom he represents, the latter reaps all the benefit of what the surety has done in his name; so that, if his debt has been paid by the surety, the creditor cannot demand the payment of it from him. Let us apply this illustration to the subject before us. If Christ made satisfaction on the cross for the sins of his people, not for some of them only but for them all, as we are expressly assured, it would be contrary to justice to subject them also, to the punishment. But, if the saints may fall from a state of grace, and perish in their sins, satisfaction will be twice exacted, first, from the surety, and secondly, from them. Either Christ did, or did not, make an atonement for the sins of his people. If he did not make an atonement for them, they must satisfy for themselves; if he did answer the demands of justice in their room, it is impossible that, under the righteous administration of Heaven, they should, by any cause, or for any reason, come into condemnation. Accordingly, the new

covenant promises to believers complete and irrevocable pardon. I will "be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."* But if the doctrine of the defectibility of the saints is true, the promise is false, for their sins may be remembered again. Nay, if this doctrine is true, Christ might have died in vain; for as one saint may fall from a state of grace as well as another, it might happen that not a single sinner should be actually redeemed by his blood from everlasting destruction.

The next argument is founded on the intercession of Christ. Those in whose behalf he prays that they may be preserved from evil, and may finally be brought to the place where he is, shall certainly be saved, "for him the Father hears always." Such is his prayer for his followers: "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It is obviously false to say, that this is a prayer for his immediate disciples alone, for he himself has extended it to all believers: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word."† It is a manifest evasion to say, that it is a prayer solely for their preservation from afflictions and temptations; because, in the first place, if this was his prayer, it has not been answered, as his disciples, in the beginning and in all subsequent ages, have been exposed to both; and because, in the second place, we know it to be his will that they should be exposed to them for their trial and improvement. And how absurd is it to suppose, that our Lord would pray that they might be kept from such things as might give them uneasiness, and might eventually lead them into sin, but neglected to pray that they might be kept from sin itself! It is still more daring to say, that the perseverance of the saints does not follow from this prayer, because his prayers have not always been answered. Thus, he prayed for his murderers, many of whom persisted in unbelief. But we should distinguish between the prayers of Christ as a man, and as Mediator. As a man, he prayed, in obedience to the law of love, for his enemies, leaving it to

* Heb. viii. 12.

† John xvii. 11, 15, 20.

God to deal with them according to his sovereign pleasure. We have no reason to think that he prayed on the cross as Mediator; or, if we should take this view of it, we may be certain that his prayer was answered in the case of all to whom it extended, by the conversion of thousands of the men who with wicked hands crucified and slew him. The prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, was evidently offered up by him in the character of the High Priest and Intercessor of the church, who, for the sake of his people, had sanctified or dedicated himself to this office. Shall our Saviour intercede in vain? Shall any of those for whom he shed his blood fall away and perish, although he has requested that their faith should not fail? No; it is impossible. "Because I live," he has said, "ye shall live also." "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* He does not pray in the unmeaning strain of our adversaries: 'Keep them from evil, if they will keep themselves; bring them to glory, if they do not stop in the way.' He prays that Divine grace may be sufficient for them, and enable them to go from strength to strength, till they appear before God in the heavenly Zion.

Other arguments in support of the doctrine of perseverance are derived from the inhabitation of the Spirit. That the Holy Ghost is given to believers, is a truth so plainly taught, and so generally acknowledged, that it may at present be taken for granted. It is certain that men are in a state of grace only while they enjoy his presence, and that, if he should be taken away, they would return to a state of nature. To decide the question, therefore, respecting the perseverance of the saints, it is only necessary to ascertain whether he is a transient visitant, or a constant inmate in their souls. Let us hear, then, the words of our Lord to his disciples: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."† This is a virtual promise of the Spirit *in perpetuum*, and, consequently, an assurance to the disciples that they should be guided, and assisted, and protected by him, to the end of their lives. Here, then, is one instance, in which the perseverance of

* John xiv. 19. Rom. viii. 34.

† John xiv. 16.

some saints was secured by supernatural grace. But perhaps our adversaries will say, that this promise respected the disciples only in their official character, and implied nothing more than that they should always enjoy the assistance of the Spirit in their apostolical labours. The whole context shews that such an interpretation is totally unfounded; but that every ground of doubt with respect to the constant inhabitation of the Spirit in believers may be removed, let me quote another passage against which the plea of particular or exclusive application cannot be alleged: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."* We know from other places that this water signifies the Spirit. Now, observe that he who drinks of this water shall never thirst. It is a poor, pitiful commentary on the words to say, that he shall not thirst while he is drinking, but that if he gives over using this water he shall thirst again; for this was true of the water of Jacob's well, as well as of this living water which is contrasted with it, and preferred to it. It is plainly meant that he shall never thirst, because he shall have an unfailing supply; and accordingly it is added, that "this water shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The water shall never cease, or the Spirit shall never be withdrawn, but shall continue with those to whom he has been given till the work of their salvation is completed. I do not conceive it to be possible to express more explicitly the perseverance of the saints. If the Holy Spirit shall never be taken from them, then they shall never fall from a state of grace.

There are two offices assigned to the Spirit, from which we may draw the same conclusion. He is sent to seal believers, and to be the earnest of the future inheritance. They are both mentioned in the following passage: "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."† A seal was used for different purposes;—to mark a person's property, to secure his treasures, or to authenticate a deed. In the first sense, the Spirit distinguishes believers as the peculiar people of God; in the

* John iv. 14.

† 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

second, he guards them as his precious jewels ; in the third, he confirms or ratifies their title to salvation. And can we suppose that this work of the Spirit may be counteracted, and rendered of no effect ; that those whom he has separated to God may be again confounded with the mass of sinners ; that the treasures over which he watches may be scattered and lost ; and that the title of the saints, although authenticated by his signature, may be reversed ? With the gift of the Spirit for the purpose of sealing, the Apostle connects the idea of establishment ; but according to the hypothesis of our adversaries, they are not connected, and he who has been sealed may stumble and fall. We know, however, whom it will be our wisdom to believe.—Again, the Spirit is represented as “an earnest.” An earnest is a part given as a security for the future possession of the whole. The Holy Ghost is the earnest of the heavenly inheritance, because he begins that holiness in the soul which will be perfected in heaven, and imparts those joys which are foretastes of its blessedness. A work may be begun, but not finished, because the workman has desisted from a change of views, or has met with obstacles which made it impossible to proceed. Those with whom we contend are of opinion that, from the latter cause, the work of grace in the heart of man may be stopped, namely, from his waywardness and obstinacy. But if the workman has pledged himself to execute his plan, and is possessed of sufficient resources to fulfil his engagement, the work will go on, and in due time will be completed. Now, the design of representing the Spirit as an earnest, is manifestly to assure us that the work which he has begun in the soul of believers, he will “perform to the day of Jesus Christ.” The designation given to him is an assurance that he will not desist. He could not be an earnest, if it might happen that those who have received him should not obtain the inheritance. To call him so in this case, would create false expectations. But, let God be true, and every man who contradicts him a liar. If he has granted his people the earnest of the Spirit in their hearts, he will not fail to bestow all the blessedness for which he has given them reason to hope. “If children, they are heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with his Son Jesus Christ.” *

* Rom. viii. 17.

Some of the arguments by which our opponents support their doctrine, have been occasionally mentioned. I shall now take notice of their reasoning from certain passages of Scripture.

The first argument is founded upon the following words in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."* Here it is supposed, they say, that a righteous man may fall from holiness, and perish in guilt. There is an answer to this argument, which they treat with contempt as a mere evasion, namely, that the person here mentioned is not a saint, but a man of a good moral character, and that the life and death spoken of in the passage are of a temporal nature. It is justified, however, by the context; and whoever examines it with attention will find, that nothing is said of him which may not be affirmed of many who have a form of godliness, but have not experienced its power; and that the prophet is describing the treatment of different characters in the course of God's providential government. We grant that such a man may fall from his righteousness; while at the same time, with perfect consistency, we affirm the perseverance of the saints. But there is another answer,—that this is a hypothetical statement, the design of which is to point out the connexion, under the Divine administration, between righteousness and happiness, and between unrighteousness and misery. We have a similar statement in another place, where an Apostle says to believers, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;"† although we know, from the principles of Paul, that he did not conceive it possible that a true saint should perish. The import of such statements is simply this, that if one thing happen another will follow. But they do not affirm the actual existence of either the one or the other. When a philosopher says, If a comet should impinge upon the earth, or come too near it, the earth would be shattered into pieces, or burnt up, or driven from its orbit,—

* Ezek. xviii. 24.

† Rom. viii. 13.

he does not suppose or fear that this hypothetical case will be realized. What, then, it may be asked, is the use of such statements? I answer, that, while they point out the necessity of continuance in holiness to the attainment of final salvation, they are a mean of exciting believers to watchfulness, and diligence, and prayer, and thus contribute to their perseverance in grace; for God deals with them as rational creatures, and works upon them by motives addressed to their hopes and their fears.

Another argument is founded on the parable of the sower: "He that receiveth the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." * It is not a little surprising, that this passage should be quoted by our opponents in support of their doctrine. It speaks evidently of a man who receives the word of God and continues for a time, and then falls away; and thus far it is quite to their purpose. But unhappily for them, our Saviour gives us the reason of failure, that he has no root in himself; plainly implying that, if he had had root in himself, he would have withstood every temptation. The passage, instead of militating against our doctrine, plainly teaches the perseverance of the saints, by signifying that the cause why some do not persevere is, that they are not saints, or have not the grace of God in their hearts; for this is the only root which can preserve the plant from withering away. Our Lord distinguishes such hearers of the word from believers, when he describes the former as stony ground, and the latter as good ground. He thus points out an essential difference between them. They are not of the same species; and it is altogether illogical to conclude, that what may be affirmed of the one may also be affirmed of the other.

The next argument is deduced from these words in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away," or, "having fallen away, to renew

* Matth. xiii. 20, 21.

them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." * This passage is eagerly laid hold of by those who deny the perseverance of the saints, as decisive in their favour; for, are not the persons described manifestly possessed of the characteristic qualifications of the saints, and yet it is supposed that they may irrecoverably apostatize? Let us examine the qualifications, and see whether they imply any thing which may not be found in the unregenerated. "They were once enlightened;" but so may all be said to be to whom the Gospel is preached, and who are acquainted with its doctrines. They have "received the knowledge of the truth," as the Apostle expresses himself in another part of this epistle; or, as Peter says, they have "known the way of righteousness."† In this manner, the unbelieving Jews were enlightened, and for this reason their sin was highly aggravated: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."‡—"They were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" but so are all those who experience his common influences, by which they are impressed under the dispensation of the Gospel; and so were those in the primitive times who were endowed with miraculous powers, which were given to them by the Spirit. But that such persons were not all true believers, is evident from the words of our Lord to some of them: "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you." || He never acknowledged them as genuine disciples.—"They have tasted the good word of God;" so had the hearers in the parable of the sower, whose case we considered above, and concerning whom, it is plain that they never were possessed of saving faith, for they had no root in themselves. Concerning the other two particulars, "their partaking of the heavenly gift," and "tasting the powers of the world to come," I shall say nothing, because it is doubtful what they mean, and consequently no use can legitimately be made of them in this argument. A conjectural interpretation proves nothing. We may presume, however, from the connexion in which they appear, that they imply no higher qualifications than those which have been already considered. The passage supposes the apostasy of

* Heb. vi. 4—6. † 1b. x. 26. 2 Pet. ii. 21. ‡ John xv. 22. || Matth. vii. 23.

persons who had advanced as far, it may be, as unconverted men could advance, but were destitute of true grace, which never fails.

Another passage is in the second Epistle of Peter ; but after what has been said, the solution must be so obvious, that it is unnecessary to point it out. It speaks of those who, through "the knowledge of Christ, have escaped the pollutions of the world," and "whose latter end is worse than their beginning."* But, what were those but the temporary hearers of the Gospel of whom we have already spoken ? It would require a long time, and much repetition, to follow our adversaries in their comments upon Scripture ; and I shall therefore desist, as the specimen which has been given is sufficient.

They produce examples also in support of their system, as of David, Solomon, Hymeneus, Philetus, and Demas. Our answer is, that, with respect to such of them as were saints, we affirm that they might fall into great sins without losing the principle of grace ; as Peter did, who retained faith, although he denied his Master ; and with respect to the rest, their case has been already disposed of. The fall of mere professors of religion is nothing to the purpose.

A general argument is founded on the exhortations of Scripture, in which the saints are called to watch and labour, and work out their salvation with fear and trembling ; in which exhortations it is implied, that the event is uncertain. It may be remarked that, being addressed to societies of Christians in which there was a mixture of believers and hypocrites, they were properly expressed in such a manner as to imply that the result was problematical. But, not to insist upon this answer, it ought to be considered, that the purpose of God does not supersede the use of means, nor is grace given to render our own exertions superfluous. God will certainly save those whom he has chosen, but he will save them by his word and ordinances, and by a diligent improvement of opportunities and privileges. If this is the instituted plan of effecting his purpose, exhortations and admonitions do not necessarily imply the uncertainty of the issue, but merely point out the manner and order in which the design will be accomplished. A man will not die before the appoint-

* 2 Pet. ii. 20.

ed time, and yet there is no inconsistency in telling him, that unless he avoid dangers, and take food and medicine, he cannot live. His knowledge that upon such conditions life depends, leads him to use those precautions by which the number of his days is completed, and the Divine purpose respecting him is executed. Believers are not merely passive subjects of Divine grace, but God works in them and by them, and requires that they should do their part while he is doing his.

It is objected, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is unfavourable to the interests of holiness. But how it can have this effect, it is not easy to perceive. It is perseverance in holiness which we maintain ; or, in other words, we maintain that believers will persevere in holiness to the end ; and it will require, I presume, more discernment than any of you possesses, to discover the tendency of this opinion to make men fall into sin. Our doctrine holds out no hope of final salvation to those who are living in sin. No man can have this hope unless he is walking in the way of God. It is another doctrine which is unfavourable to holiness, namely, that men shall be saved if they have once believed, although they live as they please. The objection has no relation to the genuine doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, and is altogether unworthy of notice.

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account of the history of the British Empire, from
the first settlement of the colonies to the present
time. In the second part, I have given a more
particular account of the colonies, and of the
various measures which have been taken for their
improvement. In the third part, I have given
an account of the present state of the colonies,
and of the measures which are now taken for
their improvement. In the fourth part, I have
given an account of the various measures which
have been taken for the improvement of the
colonies, and of the success which has attended
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